The Lived Experiences of Female Leaders in Two University Settings: Perceived Supports, Barriers, and Challenges

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We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standards

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We, the undersigned, certify that **Brittany A. E. Jakubiec**, candidate for the degree of Master of Education has presented her thesis with the following title: ***The lived experiences of female leaders in two university settings: Perceived supports, barriers, and challenges***, that the thesis is acceptable in form and content, and that a satisfactory knowledge of the field covered by the thesis was demonstrated by the candidate through an oral examination held on March 10, 2015.

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Abstract

The dearth of women in higher education both as full professors and senior administrators is alarming, and the factors impeding their entrance and limiting their advancement are relatively unknown. The purpose of this research was to document the lived experiences of women leaders who were full professors or who held senior leadership positions in two universities in Atlantic Canada. I researched the perceived supports, challenges, and barriers that women leaders faced in their professional lives, as well as the influence of gender in their leadership positions. I approached the research from a social constructivism standpoint and utilized a phenomenological research design. I used standpoint theory to analyze the data. Data sources included two interviews with each participant and a seven-day leadership journal from each participant. Women noted multiple supports, challenges, and barriers in their personal and professional lives. Supports include husbands, mentors, workshops, and networking. Challenges and barriers included children, colleagues, work/life conflicts, invisibility, and a lack of leadership development programs. Findings indicated that gender equality has not been achieved in the postsecondary setting, and gendered expectations, sexism, and discrimination remain strong barriers for women. Applying standpoint theory, the social location of the participants impacted their lives, opinions, and views of leadership in postsecondary institutions. Their lived realities and experiences changed over time as the academic and institutional culture changed over time, and, as such, their views about women and leadership were altered. Implications of this work are that university leaders need to create supports for women and make them easily accessible, and create a women-

friendly environment that will increase the ease with which women can enter, advance, and succeed in the institution.

Keywords: women's studies, leadership, higher education, senior administration, professorship

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my partner and son, who spent many days wrestling, reading books and comics, and putting together amazing train sets whilst I worked away in our dining room. Thank you.

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CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

Historically within universities, the professorship was dominated by men and was influenced by monasticism, meaning women were not typically present in academic positions (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012). The academic environment, culture, and work ethic were shaped by men, leading to gendered norms that oversee faculty life even today. Today, despite some improvement, female leaders in North American universities are still underrepresented and face myriad personal and professional challenges. (Blood et al., 2012; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Hornsby, Morrow-Jones, & Ballam, 2012; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012).

In Canadian universities, women outnumber men in terms of undergraduate and master's students, and women represent 47% of PhD students. However, in Canadian universities roughly 1 in 5 full professors are women (Council of Canadian Academies, 2012). In the United States, women hold only 1 in 4 full professor positions (West & Curtis, 2006). In postsecondary institutions (i.e., universities, colleges, etc.) women are far less likely to hold prestigious positions and are far more likely to be paid lower salaries (American Association of University Professors, 2010; Doucet, Smith, & Durand, 2012; Martin, 2011). Furthermore, women who personify double minority statuses, such as being an African American female full professor, face an even greater representation disparity, as well as various barriers and challenges (Croom & Patton, 2011; Morrison, 2010). This research focused on uncovering reasons why women were underrepresented

in leadership positions in universities and what supports, if any, were available to those women who held leadership positions.

Research Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this research was to document the lived experiences of women leaders who were full professors or held senior leadership positions at two universities in Atlantic Canada. The following research questions directed the study:

1. What personal and professional supports assist women in assuming and maintaining a leadership position in a university?
2. What are personal and professional challenges for women leaders in a university?
3. How does gender influence a woman's leadership journey and reality?

In line with the research purpose and questions, I conducted research under a social constructivism worldview and a phenomenological research design. I analyzed the data using standpoint theory. Under such a research framework I explored the perceived realities of my participants.

Personal Background: Emergence of the Research

When contemplating the genesis of my thesis topic, two key issues came to mind: my life journey and the educational influences during that journey. I grew up in a household with my mother and two siblings. I was a studious, hardworking, and self-motivated learner. Teachers were my role models and mentors, and school was my sanctuary. Although I was a good student, I had never considered going to university. One day, my Grade 12 advanced mathematics teacher asked me, "Where are you applying for university?" I was completely taken aback—I had not realized I could

dream this big! Unbeknown to me, these childhood experiences and my love of school and education led to my current interest in and pursuit of a Master of Education degree and a career in academia.

In 2006, I applied and was accepted to the University of New Brunswick (UNB) where I majored in Psychology. At UNB, I had several mentors who assisted in the development of my self-confidence as a student. More specifically, they made me feel like I could succeed at university, because I had the abilities and skills needed for an undergraduate student. In particular, an example that had a positive effect on my self-confidence was when I was hand-selected from my peers by a professor to take part in a community mental health support and information group for teens with parents experiencing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Also, I worked in the research labs of two amazing women professors who empowered me to explore my interests, develop crucial and valuable research skills, and bear witness to what it meant to be strong, successful women in academia. It was in my time at UNB that I first considered a career in academia. It was during this time that I felt empowered by my intellectual abilities and my work ethics. Finally, through my experiences with women who were strong researchers, teachers, and mentors, I began to feel passionate about gender studies as a research discipline.

Then a beautiful boy named Kaden entered into my life in 2010. Suddenly, I was a young mother seeking a career in academia. Was this scenario even possible? How could a young mother be successful in fulfilling her motherhood duties and academic responsibilities simultaneously? I knew there would be many hurdles and struggles ahead; however, I did not fully understand the obstacles, and this realization resulted in

self-reflection and self-doubt. Could I really succeed in this field? Would my child be affected in some way due to my passion for a career in education? I did not have the answers to these questions, but my educational journey continued.

In 2011, I began studying at the University of Prince Edward Island. Interestingly, at that time, two mentors entered into my life, both being female professors and mothers: Drs. Stacey MacKinnon and Jane Preston. I had not realized this connection until looking at the picture as a whole, but now it is clear. I believe I was meant to relate to and learn from these amazing women, because they showed me that mothers could have a successful career in academia. It is also very apparent that all of these women have impacted my life for the better and have supported me, sometimes unconsciously, in my own journey.

Then, in 2013, I had the opportunity to attend and co-present at the *Canadian Society for the Study of Education* conference in Victoria, BC. Although I attended the conference to present a paper on the "Challenges of Rural Principals," just for fun, I elected to attend several presentations by women talking about what it meant to be a woman and a mom in academe. I was completely enthralled. I started asking myself daunting questions about my own future in academia, such as "What barriers will stand in my way as a young mother?" and "What supports will I have in pursuing this career?" My questions broadened, becoming less self-centered, and I began to wonder about the mentors in my life and the women before me. What struggles had they gone through to "make it?" What were the supports in their lives, and, really, did I have those supports? Were they available to others who were young mothers with similar dreams and aspirations? Attending this conference was an important catalyst in uncovering and

realizing the interest I had for the topics of women, leadership, and academe. In fact, I would label it as a pivotal point in my budding research and educational career. I had discovered something I was genuinely passionate about, and, after a conversation with a mentor, I realized this topic was going to be my thesis work.

Significance and Implications

Some researchers argue that the dearth of women in higher education, both in full professor and senior administrative positions, was not due to lack of ability or level of commitment from women but due to the lack of opportunities (Blackmore & Sachs, 2007; Castillo Baltodano, Carlson, Witcher Jackson, & Mitchell, 2011). Actually, the reasons why there are limited opportunities for women leaders is relatively unknown. The state of women leaders in postsecondary institutions is also unknown. Furthermore, as stated by Castillo et al., "Perhaps most imperative is the need for more research on the continuing impediments of advancing women into leadership positions" (p. 75). My research was an attempt to fill that gap as very few studies explored the supports and challenges that women employed in postsecondary institutions experience with regard to leadership roles and positions (Blood et al., 2012; Dryfhout & Estes, 2010). There was an urgent need to address gender inequality in postsecondary institutions. Even though many universities were making strides toward filling leadership positions with competent and capable women, gender equality as a fundamental human right must be a central component of the overall functioning of Canadian universities (Doucet et al., 2012; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2013; Wroblewski & Leitner, 2011).

My research also evoked the question about why was there an urgent need for women leaders in education. Women leaders were capable of being role models for other girls and women aiming for a career in academia and in the educational field. Drury, Siy, and Cheryan (2011) suggested that women leaders in education act as role models, especially in Sciences, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields. For young women (especially high school students) aspiring to be leaders, having a strong female role model can influence performance in a positive way and foster a greater sense of belonging. Relatedly, having more women in particular fields, such as higher education, may positively influence the academic environment resulting in a women-friendly atmosphere (Sanders, Willemsen, & Millar, 2009). This point was especially important for women seeking to attain full professorship, where women's perceptions of the academic environment related to the ease with which they are able to enter into such a position. Therefore, having women leaders present in the academic environment impacted the field in a variety of ways, whether in terms of being significant role models for young women, or in influencing the women-friendliness of the environment.

It was also noted that women are perceived to be remarkable leaders as they often possess unique leadership skills that contribute to their leadership style. Specifically, women leaders tend to be nurturing (Davis, 2007), genuinely caring (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011), and have a propensity toward strong interpersonal relationships, because they tend to embody collaborative and cooperative leadership styles (Simpson, 2012). With these constructive skills in mind, the level at which women are represented in academia is simply unacceptable. There are many benefits in having an increased

percentage of strong, capable, and impassioned women leaders in education and academia, and this gap must not be ignored any longer.

The results of this study will have the potential to inform and call upon leaders and decision-makers at universities to be more accountable in ensuring gender equality and equal representation in educational leadership (Doucet et al., 2012; Gabriela, Dan, & Antonia, 2013), specifically in creating woman-friendly environments (Sanders et al., 2009), enacting faculty development programs (Blood et al., 2012), and providing additional social supports to the limited number of women in higher educational leadership positions (Dryfhout & Estes, 2010). In terms of senior administrative positions in higher education institutions, women experience a lack of opportunities for advancement and entrance (American Council on Education, as cited in Ballenger, 2010), thus, this point amplifies the need and significance of the research.

Additional significance of this study is in the practical application of the research findings, in particular, in gaining a deeper understanding of women leaders and their lived realities in university settings. For example, the gender of a professor has a significant influence on student performance in STEM fields. A study by Carrell, Page, and West (2010) revealed, "Female students perform better in their math and science courses when they are taught by a woman" (p. 1124). Thus, more women professors in STEM departments could attract and yield better performing female students and, perhaps more importantly, influence their entrance in those male-dominated fields.

Definitions of Key Words and Terms

For improved clarity and increased understanding, certain key words need to be explained and defined. These terms include professor, associate professor, assistant

professor, senior administration, and gender. According to the University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI) Collective Agreement (University of Prince Edward Island, Board of Governors and Faculty Association, n.d.), a faculty member is defined as an individual "who holds a tenured, probationary or term appointment at the rank of Professor, Associate Professor, Assistant Professor or Lecturer" (p. 1). As outlined by the UPEI Collective Agreement, position or job ranking for faculty members is as follows: lecturers, assistant professors, associate professors, and professors.

Senior administration refers to leadership positions in the top tiers of administration at the university. For the purpose of my research, women in senior leadership positions in universities includes women who uphold such positions such as dean, associate dean, directors of administrative departments, chairs or heads of academic departments, president, vice president, provost or chancellor, assistant provost or chancellor, vice president of academic affairs, and finance.

Finally, my definition of gender is a lens through which an individual understands their experiences (Bem, 1993). Additionally, gender is socially and culturally constructed and defined (Bem, 1994). For this research, I did not focus on the many issues that are sometimes affiliated with gender issues. For example, this research did not purposefully delve into Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, or Questioning/Queer (LGBTQ) issues. Although challenges associated with LGBTQ identities or experiences were not issues that I explicitly inquired about, the wording of the interview questions did allow for participants to speak to personal experiences if they wished. Even though participants did not share such stories, that is not to say that such issues do not exist for women leaders in Canadian universities. In my discussions of gender, especially when

discussing participant experiences, I did not make assumptions regarding their possible views of gender. Instead, I attempted to present their stories and experiences from their standpoints using their own voices.

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations of the Research

Qualitative research, as a philosophical approach, has assumptions threaded throughout its framework. In qualitative research, it is generally believed that reality is subjective and reflective of personal interpretations and constructions (Patton, 2002). A social constructivism paradigm is used for this research, and, from this standpoint, I sought to "understand how social actors recognize, produce, and reproduce social actions and how they come to share an intersubjective understanding of specific life circumstances" (Schwandt, 2007, p. 39). A large part of qualitative methodology is descriptions and stories of the participants' lived experiences and social contexts (Geertz, 1973; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). With that, significant value is attributed to *context*, because without it, results lack meaning and perspective (Patton, 2002). In terms of axiology, it is believed that the research (e.g., data collection, analysis, report writing, etc.) is significantly influenced by the researcher's personal beliefs, theories, and analytical frameworks that the researcher values. In turn, qualitative research and its findings are immersed with subjectivity and are expressed via descriptive, richly contextualized information.

The descriptive themes, subjective findings, and context-laden results are strengths of qualitative research. Having stated such, there are a number of issues of which readers of qualitative findings must be aware. First, depending on the reader and his/her situation, it is important that findings are potentially transferable rather than

generalizable, where the generalizability refers to the extent that which results can be applied to other contexts and transferability refers to the concepts of relevancy and applicability. Results are transferable when they may be relevant and applicable in similar situations or contexts, such as different groups of women leaders in education. As argued by Guba and Lincoln (as cited in Patton, 2002), "The degree of transferability is a direct function of the similarity between the two contexts" (p. 584). Due to a small sample size of eight participants, the results of my research are not to be generalized, but are potentially transferable.

In relation to women leaders in education, it is important that research findings transfer from one context to the next, rather than attempt to generalize to all educational settings. For this reason, qualitative research is a credible way of re-presenting and valuing contextualized descriptions of participants' lives. Not all women leaders will experience the same challenges and supports, so rather than attempting to present one objective, factual account of life, qualitative research is meant to present subjective realities. Thus, the research was approached from a phenomenological and social constructivism perspective, and the findings are taken as a re-presentation of their individual contexts. Additionally, in having chosen two universities in Atlantic Canada as the sites of my research, I believe that the results are prone to be relatable to women who worked in similar educational contexts in this region.

According to Rudestam and Newton (2001), delimitations are self-imposed boundaries applied to the research. My research remained manageable by applying delimitations. First, I decided to study women who have attained full professorship or who work in senior administration rather than associate professors, assistant professors,

and women in lower hierarchical types of administrative positions. This choice was made in order to narrow the participant pool so that I described the lives of women in specific positions. This delimitation lead to a richer form of specialized data especially in terms of perceived supports. It was crucial to identify and understand the supports that have assisted women leaders in succeeding. In having identified these supports, aspiring leaders and women will be better able to locate and utilize them.

Second, I conducted research using a phenomenological method, where perhaps others would have considered an ethnographic approach, instead. Rather than attempting to understand "the culture of this group of people" (Patton, 2002, p. 81) as is the goal of ethnographic research, I am attempting to understand "the meaning, structure, and essence of the *lived experiences* [italics added] of this phenomenon for this person or group of people" (Patton, 2002, p. 104). I believe I was best able to describe what it meant to be a woman and in a position of leadership in an educational institution through this phenomenological methodology.

With the delimitations explained, research limitations are "restrictions in the study over which you have no control" (Rudestam & Newton, 2001, p. 90). In relation to this definition, several limitations applied to my research. First, although data were collected via several methods (i.e., interviews and leadership logs), all data were mediated through me, a subjective body. Because I was the sole research instrument for data collection and analysis, to a certain extent, data results were influenced by me and my worldview. On this topic, Patton (2002) wrote:

> Qualitative inquiry offers opportunities not only to learn about the experiences of others but also to examine the experience that the inquirer brings to the inquiry, experiences that will, to some extent, affect what is studied and help share, for better or worse, what is discovered. (p. 27)

The entire research process was irreversibly influenced by my own subjectivity and by that of my participants. My analysis included the interpretation of participants' subjective experiences and stories; therefore, it is important that I acknowledged their perspectives, points of view, ideologies, and worldviews so that I re-present the data as honestly as possible.

Introduction to the Theoretical Framework

I used standpoint theory, as originally conceived by Dorothy Smith and others, to theoretically analyze my research findings. According to Smith (1999), where one stands has an impact on what is thought to be true, and no two individuals have the same standpoint (Appelrouth & Desfer Edles, 2011; Smith, 1999). In using standpoint theory to analyze the data, I attempted to distinguish between differing perspectives while respecting their individual viewpoints (Crasnow, 2009). In discussing knowledge in relation to standpoint theory, Rouse (2009) wrote:

> Knowledge claims occur as part of a practical and perceptual interaction with one another in shared surroundings. We judge our knowledge claims and principles of justification by what they enable us to see, say, and do, not the other way around. Standpoint theories situate knowledge and epistemic warrant within the world, amid our interactions with other agents, rather than in an abstracted space of representations. (p. 202)

Thus, knowledge is subjective and changing rather than objective and static. Knowledge claims, as articulated by Rouse, are influenced by interactions and by where an individual stands in the world. Standpoint theory is built on this foundation, where subjectivity is valued and objective knowledge—or the idea of a "universal vantage point"—does not exist (Schwandt, 2007, p. 276).

Furthermore, gender inevitably influences daily experiences, knowledge, and perspectives as "men and women bracket and view the world in distinctive ways, in conjunction with their distinct, biographically articulated lifeworlds" (Smith, 1999, p. 320). Using standpoint theory to analyze data allowed me to account for such differences in perspectives and worldviews. Gender also influences power relations and the creation of knowledge. Crasnow (2009) argued that standpoint theory "highlights the importance of relations of power in the production of knowledge" and "can provide a means of uncovering power relations" (p. 191). One example provided included that of women feeling silenced in the realm of academia and how silencing is a product of the interaction between power and knowledge production. Keeping this point in mind, I attempted to provide a fair re-presentation of the participants' experiences in the male-dominated context of higher education.

In approaching data analysis from this perspective, I yielded a rich account of the professional and personal lives of my participants, the barriers and supports they experienced, how gender influenced their interactions and relationships at work, as well as their own beliefs and perceptions about leadership and themselves. In using standpoint theory as my tool for analysis, I attempted to deconstruct what has been accepted by some people as objective knowledge and truth about women leaders, and in turn re-construct this knowledge using the stories and voices of the participants. I believe that the emerging stories reveal greater depth and breadth to what was currently known about women leaders in universities.

However, I also recognize that what I assert as knowledge is influenced by me—a subjective body. Rolin (2009) wrote, "Human interests determine (1) what features are

considered significant enough to be represented … and (2) to what degree of detail those features are represented" (p. 223). According to standpoint theory, then, *knowledge* and *truth* are mediated and presented by subjective bodies who ultimately decide what stories are heard and by whom (Rolin, 2009; Rouse, 2009). Thus, I recognize those women who declined their participation in the study and their unheard stories. I also recognize that my glimpse into the lives of the eight participants was brief and partial, however significant and revealing. As Rouse (2009) argued, it is not up to researchers to decide "what is true or false, justified or unjustified" (p. 202). I attempted to present the findings in such a way that was true to the participants and their stories. However, I would be remise if I did not clarify that the data were still exclusionary of those who declined to participate and filtered by me, a subjective being. In conclusion, the stories and perspectives presented herein are pieces and parts of a greater, mostly untold story.

Summary

The initial chapter introduced the topic of women leaders in universities across North America with a narrowed research focus on two Atlantic Canadian universities. The research purpose, questions, and methodology were introduced. Explanations of key terms relating to this study were provided. Also, within this chapter, my personal background and beliefs were presented. The significance of the study was stated, and assumptions, delimitations, and limitations related to the research were identified. In the final part of the chapter I introduced the concept of standpoint theory and explained why it is well aligned with my study.

In chapter two, the review of the literature, I provide a detailed account of information pertaining to women leaders in educational contexts, perceived challenges

and supports, and future directions. In chapter three, the research methodology, research design, and data collection methods are outlined. A justification of the chosen approaches is provided. Issues dealing with the trustworthiness of data and ethical considerations are also described. In chapter four, I present the data obtained from 8 participants and their 16 interviews and 8 leadership journals. In chapter five, I discuss the research findings, offer recommendations, suggest future research avenues, add personal reflections of the research and my experiences, and summarize the research.

CHAPTER 2:

LITERATURE REVIEW

In Chapter 1, I highlighted that women who held full professor positions and women who assumed senior leadership roles are unequally represented in universities as compared to men. In what follows, I provided additional details of these inequalities. Comparatively, women occupy fewer overall teaching staff and senior administration positions as compared to men. Below I report, in detail, the percentages and ratio of women to men across Canada and the United States. I address my research purpose and questions by organizing this chapter into several sections. First, I address issues relating to the subjects of my research, that is, women full professors and leaders in universities. Ensuing sections address my research questions, and I highlight current literature regarding known supports for women leaders in universities, supports for maintaining such leadership positions, the challenges faced by women leaders in universities, and gender issues that are related to leadership. Specifically, I outline the supports and challenges faced by women leaders in universities, mothers in academe, gender issues related to leadership, myths and misconceptions related to women as leaders, and the university's role in women's career advancement.

Women Leaders in Universities

Statistics Canada (2011a, 2012) offered much quantifiable information to show that women are marginalized in terms of representation as full professors. Women represent 37.6% of Canadian universities' teaching staff, while men held 62.3% of those positions (Statistics Canada, 2011a). Additionally, women hold between 21 to 23% of full professoriate positions, while men occupied 76 to 78% (Council of Canadian

Academies, 2012; Statistics Canada, 2012). In Table 1, I provide a summary of this information. Not only were women represented in lower numbers, they were also paid less. Potential reasons for this disparity and unequal representation include women a) spending a greater amount of time in lower ranks and b) being less likely to be promoted (May, Moorhouse, & Bossard, 2010). Additionally, discriminatory attitudes, such as believing women are incapable of being a leader, impeded women's entry into leadership positions as well as limiting the advancement opportunities in such roles (Jakobsh, 2004).

Table 1

Canadian statistics for women professors and full professors

Category	Women	Men
Overall teaching staff	37.6%	62.4%
Full professors (2010/2011)	23.4%	76.6%
Full professors (2012)	21.7%	78.3%
University professors	38.9%	61.1%
Salaries for full-time faculty	$137,846	$145,045

Source: Council of Canadian Academies, 2012; Statistics Canada, 2011a, 2011b, 2012

The Canadian statistics do not differ greatly from specific numbers within the Atlantic Canadian region, the geographical context of my research. In the tables that follow, I provide the percentages of women in Arts, Science, Business, Education, and Nursing faculties and schools for four universities in the Atlantic Provinces. I also provide a summary table that included averages from across the four universities. Of the 16 universities in the Atlantic Provinces, few had complete statistics and information for each academic department. Thus, four tables presented herein are reflective of four universities who had sufficient available information on their websites. Although each

sample university presented has differing faculties and departments, it was never my goal to compare between schools; rather, it is my goal to present basic statistics about the representation of male and female faculty.

As seen in Tables 1–6, women are generally underrepresented in all faculties with the exception of Education and Nursing. This statement is not a summative conclusion, as some of the universities do not house an Education or Nursing faculty. Most notably, women professors in the ranks of associate, assistant, and full professor in Arts, Science, and Business lag well behind in almost all of the four universities. For example, women held only 39% of Arts professoriate positions, 27% of Science positions, and 19% of Business positions (see Table 6).

Table 2

Atlantic Canadian University 1 statistics for full-time faculty (women)

Faculty	**Assistant**	**Associate**	**Full Professor**	**Total**
Arts	36%	54%	38%	47%
Science	31%	34%	9%	25%
Business	50%	0%	33%	33%

Source: All information was retrieved from respective university website.

Table 3

Atlantic Canadian University 2 statistics for full-time faculty (women)

Faculty	Assistant	Associate	Full Professor	Total
Arts	40%	38%	21%	33%
Science	46%	22%	26%	30%
Nursing	100%	100%	100%	100%
Education	100%	20%	66%	58%
Business	33%	0%	N/A	N/A

Source: All information was retrieved from respective university website.

Table 4

Atlantic Canadian University 3 statistics for full-time faculty (women)

Faculty	Assistant	Associate	Full Professor	Total
Arts	23%	33%	55%	39%
Science	18%	27%	14%	19%
Business[1]	0%	42%	25%	30%

Source: All information was retrieved from respective university website.

Table 5

Atlantic Canadian University 4 statistics for full-time faculty (women)

Faculty	Assistant	Associate	Full Professor	Total
Arts	56%	44%	28%	40%
Science	41%	41%	25%	34%
Business	22%	12%	14%	16%
Education	80%	50%	50%	58%

Source: All information was retrieved from respective university website.

[1] There was limited information for the School of Business.

Table 6

Average statistics of four universities in Atlantic Canadian (full-time faculty; women)

Faculty	Assistant	Associate	Full Professor	Total
Arts	38%	42%	35%	39%
Science	34%	31%	18%	27%
Nursing[2]	100%	100%	100%	100%
Education	90%	35%	58%	58%
Business	26%	13%	18%	19%

Source: All information was retrieved from respective university website.

Growth and advancement is slow for women in senior roles in universities across Canada. Women occupy only 30% of senior administration positions[3] while men hold 70% (Drakich & Stewart, 2007). Of the 97 public and private not-for-profit educational institutions recognized by the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC), 22 women (23%) held the position of president compared to 75 men (77%) (Charbonneau, 2013). Only three of these women are presidents in Atlantic Canadian universities, of which there are 16 total presidency positions (Association of Atlantic Universities, 2014). Of the same 97 institutions, women hold only 27% of vice-president of academic and 23% of vice-president of research positions (See Table 7 and 8 for more information). This percentage was slightly higher in Atlantic Canadian universities, where women held 31% of vice-president academic and/or research positions.

Below I have also included the statistics for the 16 universities in the Atlantic Canadian provinces and the United States. Similar to the statistics from across Canada, in general, women were less likely to hold positions in senior administration in Atlantic

[2] Only one (1) of the universities included in this table had a Faculty of Nursing.
[3] Among the positions surveyed were president, vice president, associate and assistant vice president, chair, director, and other (Berkowitz, 2005).

Canadian universities (see Table 7). In the United States, the representation of women in senior leadership positions was just as low. In 2012, women occupied only 26% of president positions in postsecondary institutions, mostly community colleges (Tunheim & Goldschmidt, 2013). The authors suggested that women wanting to enter into senior leadership positions required greater and higher quality mentorship and greater access to leadership development opportunities that are specifically designed and provided to women. Acker (2012) equated the underrepresentation of women at all levels of senior administration and as full professors to the:

> Numerical dominance of men, with the consequence that women appear different, out of place; and as a pattern of normative expectations that meshes better with common place ideas of what is 'masculine' than with what is 'feminine'. Universities, like other organizations, have gendered structures and cultures. (p. 416–417)

This quote highlighted the underlying nature of higher education leadership and its veiled beliefs and notions of women leaders. That is, the mere perception of women in leadership roles brought to mind the notion of what is masculine and feminine, as Acker (2012) implied, and that women inevitably face prejudice and negative judgment in assuming leadership roles (Eagly & Karau, 2002). The gendered culture of academia must be altered to be more women-friendly (Hornsby et al., 2012).

Table 7

Senior Administration, 16 Atlantic Canadian Universities (women)

Position	Percentage	Actual
President	18%	3
Vice President Academic and/or Research	31%	5
Vice President Administration and Finance	50%	5
Vice President (Other)[4]	33%	4
Chancellor	0%	0
Vice-Chancellor	25%	2

Source: All information was retrieved from university websites.

Table 8

Canadian statistics for women in senior administration positions in universities

Category	Women	Men
Overall senior administration staff[5]	30%	70%
Presidents	20-23%	77-80%
Vice-Presidents, academic	27%	73%
Vice-Presidents, research	23%	77%

Source: Charbonneau, 2013; Drakich & Stewart, 2007; Turpin, 2012

Although somewhat dated, O'Keefe (1991) published an informative article about women presidents in American universities. In 1991, women occupied only five of the 65 university presidency positions. The author described various barriers, challenges, and supports that women senior administrators experienced. First and foremost, negative attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions about women were impeding factors to their success

[4] This includes: Vice Presidents Student Affairs, Student Experience, International and Aboriginal Affairs, Planning, Communication and Marketing.

[5] Among the positions surveyed were president, vice president, associate and assistant vice president, chair, director, and other (Berkowitz, 2005).

and advancement. For example, women were judged based on their appearances rather than achievements; women were ignored during discussions and felt isolated within their departments; women were viewed as motherly, emotional, and weak; women had their abilities questioned constantly and had to work harder than men in order to succeed (Cummins, 2012; O'Keefe, 1991). These misconceptions impacted an individual's self-confidence as a leader. The author did point out several positive factors and supports that assisted women in their career successes. First, networking with other women provided leaders with information, support, and a medium for stress release and reduction. O'Keefe argued, "Women need to form special networks as they are often locked out of the informal 'old boys network'" (p. 314). The network had to be collegial, supportive, open, and honest. O'Keefe also stated that leadership and administrative training and development programs benefit female senior administrators, as well as personal reading (e.g., books, journals, etc.).

In Bolton's (1996) article, 17 deans in the United States and United Kingdom were asked about leadership in their respective postsecondary institutions. Only two of the deans were women, and the author highlighted specifically some of their perceived experiences. The female deans spoke of the importance of relationships in leadership, where they celebrated the achievements of others, built rapport with their colleagues, and fostered caring work environments. Bolton stated that the deans who were men spoke of similar items but used different terminology such as teamwork. Thus, it was concluded that departmental and institutional culture and environment was a factor that contributed to the success of men and women leaders (Armenti, 2004a; Bolton, 1996; Hornsby et al., 2012).

Although both articles by O'Keefe (1991) and Bolton (1996) were older in nature, they were significant when reviewing the literature. In recent published work, women are still underrepresented in senior administrative positions (Cukien, Bindhani, Amato, Smarz, & Saekang, 2012) and still face significant barriers and challenges to success. These challenges include:

> Contending for tenure and promotion, work/family responsibilities, gaining family friendly policies, career choices and planning, mentoring relationships and programs, the glass ceiling, and the impact of gender and race on achieving leadership status (Cukien et al., 2012, pp. 17–18)

Also, the importance of institutional culture and environment (i.e., being woman-friendly) was still pertinent and relevant for women leaders in the educator sector.

Supports and Challenges for Female Leaders in Universities

Not only was there a lack of literature on female leaders in universities, there was a limited amount of literature that specifically highlighted the supports and challenges that full professors and women in leadership positions at universities face. For that reason, I broadened my search and present the literature in amalgamated sections, the first of which identified both the supports and challenges for women leaders and/or aspiring leaders.

With regard to supports for female leaders, much literature focuses on the importance of mentorship. Having a mentor (either male or female) positively benefited women aspiring to be leaders and full professors (Dean, 2009; Dodds, 2005; Growe & Montgomery, 1999; Kosoko-Lasaki, Sonnino, & Voytko, 2006; Pyke, 2013). For example, new female faculty members shared that mentors in their lives assisted with the writing and research process and gave advice and information about tenure, promotion, and teaching (Dodds, 2005). In relation to mentorship, women aspiring to be full

professors reported that receiving constructive feedback from colleagues and being regarded as a notable researcher and publisher had a positive influence on their self-confidence as leaders (Pruitt, Johnson, Catlin, & Knox, 2010).

Some Canadian universities offered faculty development, professional workshops, and mentoring programs, all of which are to combat perceived barriers for both aspiring and established female leaders in universities. On their websites, some universities in the Atlantic Canadian region promoted faculty development programs. For example, the University of Prince Edward Island offered a writing retreat for faculty, and Dalhousie University offered a faculty development program within its Faculty of Medicine. However, in the case of these examples and others, the lack of data makes the extent and effectiveness of such training impossible to judge. The development and establishment of such programs may assist in lessening the negative impacts and perceived barriers that women experience in navigating the postsecondary arena as professors and senior administrators.

When asked to reflect on personal and professional supports, women noted that it was important to form a "community of other leaders" (Shields, 2005, p. 83) or "women only networks" (Coleman, 2010, p. 6). The networks could be informal or informal in nature. Women in networks offered support and were sometimes mentors and role models. Overall, networks allowed women to "compare experiences, gain support and grow in confidence" (Coleman, 2010, p. 7). Outside of social and professional networks, it was also crucial to take care of the self. Self-care came in the form of exercise, leisure activities, and socializing with friends and family (Shields, 2005).

In Cummins' (2012) study, where 19 female professors in one Canadian university were interviewed about their experiences, women noted several institutional and structural supports that impacted them in a positive way. The participants felt as though their jobs were flexible and that they were able to control their work hours to a certain extent. They also felt autonomous and independent, ultimately allowing the participants greater flexibility in managing their multiple roles as mothers and academics (Cummins, 2012).

There are also a number of identifiable barriers for women in postsecondary institutes. In addition to being underrepresented (Blood et al., 2012; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012), women in leadership positions experience barriers to entry and advancement (Castillo Baltodano et al., 2011). Various barriers and challenges have been noted in the literature. Institutionally, there is a lack of available leadership and faculty development programs, quality mentors, and networking opportunities (Blood et al., 2012; Castillo Baltodano et al., 2011; Pruitt et al., 2010; Pyke, 2013, Tessens, White, & Web, 2011). Women professors also reported workplace challenges including insufficient administrative support (Blood et al., 2012), heavy and overwhelming workloads (Tessens et al., 2011), and work/family conflicts (Pruitt et al., 2010).

Researchers often reported issues around gender as being challenging for women leaders, such as gendered misconceptions and negative attitudes about women leaders (Dean, 2009; Growe & Montgomery, 1999; Jakobsh, 2004; O'Keefe, 1991). Furthermore, the institution and academic work itself is gendered (Shields, 2005). The list of barriers and challenges is long and looming, especially in contrast to the limited number of supports that women have recounted (e.g., mentors, positive feedback).

Thus, there existed a need for effective leadership training, support programs, and networks. According to Castillo Baltodano et al. (2011), "Effective leadership programs [are] needed to better prepare women for the complexity of challenges faced by leaders of modern institutions of higher education", thus women "need organizations and systems in place to support and encourage their candidacies for top administrative positions" (p. 63). To support aspiring and established leaders, leadership programs would provide women with feedback and encouragement, possibly from peers and colleagues, as well as providing opportunities for networking, mentorship, professional development, advancement, and training. Additionally, effective programs could result in more confident and visionary women leaders. This process can take the form of grassroots efforts such as faculty development workshops or established leadership and training programs.

Mothers in Academe

As noted above, women often experienced family and career conflicts while assuming positions as educational leaders. Unfortunately, "having more women in the workforce has not eradicated traditional gender roles because men have not contributed in the domestic realm to the extent that women have contributed to family income through paid labor" (Rhoads & Rhoads, 2012, p. 13). Thus, motivations are high for both female professors on the tenure-track and those women who have attained full professorship to achieve an equal division of childcare responsibilities, especially considering the pressure to publish or perish in the world of academe. In a study of 177 professors (71 women, 106 men), only 12% of male participants took paid parental leave while 69% of female participants did. It is no surprise that spousal support played a significant role in a

woman's experience as a professor and leader in higher education. It can be ascertained from the data that women professors with children carry a heavier load than their male counterparts. Specifically, of the men surveyed, their spouses worked an average of 7.5 hours a week. For the women who participated, their spouses worked an average of 35.5 hours a week. The data revealed that, although women have attained full professorship and even tenured status, they assumed much of the household workload. While both the men and women surveyed believed in an equal division of labor, when it came to household and childcare duties, almost none actively divided labor equally (Rhoads & Rhoads, 2012).

Similarly, Dryfhout and Estes (2010) found that female professors with children were 30% less likely to have tenured faculty positions and were more likely to have intentions to leave the profession. This point inferred that the effect of children was greater for women than it was for men, perhaps due to the doubled workload that women experienced in their multiple roles as mother, spouse, and academic. Additionally, more women than men perceived parenthood and childbearing to be a barrier to obtaining full professorship (Sanders et al., 2009). Lastly, and in relation to motherhood, is the caring of aging parents. Women noted that in addition to their various roles (e.g., mother, professors, researcher, etc.), they also felt responsible for elder care (Cummins, 2012). Altogether, women felt severe work/life conflicts and interferences, overload, and stress due to role contagion (Armenti, 2004b; Cummins, 2012).

Gender Issues Related to Leadership

As indicated above, inequality of gender in leadership positions is an issue that is pertinent and real and requires attention. Once again, because there is limited literature

on the refined topic of female leaders in universities, I broadened my literature review to include inequalities that women face in the general area of leadership.

Gender significantly influences women and their leadership practices, resulting in the need to "negotiate social practices and processes that are gendered, that is practices and processes that conform to a masculine norm" (Stead & Elliot, 2012, p. 374). However, the exact relationship between a woman leader and her social context still remains unclear, except that the concept of leader is influenced by gender, race, and class (Croom & Patton, 2011; Morrison, 2010). It is simply not enough for women leaders to recognize the gendered nature of their workplaces; many female leaders must develop specific skills (e.g., critical reflection) and must gain the self-confidence to have their voice heard. Such skills enable women to challenge and question gendered practices and underlying assumptions (Stead & Elliot, 2012). Likewise, it is not acceptable for women leaders to *lead as men* if this results in personal discomfort and the perpetuation of the gendered conceptions of leadership. Further, women leaders are advised not to lead as women; rather, women leaders should "'talk like men,' hide emotions, act tough, [and] never let their guard down" (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 83). This idea of fitting in and leading as men was prominent in the literature and highlighted the need for society and organizing bodies to re-consider "what constitutes leadership behavior and what leaders should look like, as well as expectations concerning how professional women should behave" (Dean, 2009, p. 129). For example, women leaders in universities are expected to be motherly and caring (Shields, 2005). Furthermore, the fitting in phenomenon extended as far as women hiding their desire to have children so that they

would not upset their male colleagues (e.g., thinking she was incapable of doing her job due to maternal responsibilities) or miss out on a job opportunity (Armenti, 2004b).

In addition to the gendered conceptions of leadership that existed, women felt as though the academic system was itself was gendered. Specifically, there were two ways in which social pressures within postsecondary institutions affected women negatively. Women felt that two main pressures existed: the pressure to sacrifice their time and the pressure to assuming a caring, motherly role (Armenti, 2004a; Shields, 2005). Armenti (2004a) argued that within the male-dominated institutional culture, women are expected to take time off for childbearing and childrearing. Cummins (2012) also spoke of this pressure, where women are assumed to be "mommy trackers" who are expected to work less and spend more time caring for children (p. 2). Women also felt pressured to assume a caring, motherly role in terms of her teaching due to the stereotypic view that women are more suited to caregiving than to conducting academic research (Armenti, 2004a).

Women certainly felt these and other research pressures. For example, women felt as though taking time off would negatively affect their research productivity. One participant stated, "[Deciding to take time off] would make or break my CV" (Armenti, 2004a, p. 13). Due to their heightened awareness of productivity and its relation to gaining tenure, women found themselves timing pregnancies or postponing childbearing until tenure has been achieved. Whereas women professors planning for children felt stress and anxiety over timing, women professors with children had experienced guilt. Specifically, participants felt guilty for spending time with their children when there was work to be done, but also felt guilty doing work when they were not with their children. On top of these pressures, women felt as though they were working "double duty" or

"triple duty" (Armenti, 2004a, p. 14), the "second shift" (Cummins, 2012, p. 2), or doing "another day's work" (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 21) upon getting home, as they worked full time, took care of their children, and had to complete household chores and duties, leading to fatigue and stress. The author concluded that women struggled with the "male-life trajectory" of the professoriate (p. 13).

Misconceptions: Women and Leadership

In the typically male-dominant profession of educational leadership, traditional gender roles, occupational segregation, and sex-typed expectations run rampant. In such settings, "discriminatory attitudes are often veiled in inaccurate 'facts' about women's capacity for leadership" (Jakobsh, 2004, p. 3). The following statements reflected the misconceptions that exist about women leaders:

- Women are not aggressive enough (Blackmore, 1989; Jakobsh, 2004)
- Women are passive (Blackmore, 1989)
- Women lack self-confidence (Jakobsh, 2004) and self-esteem (Blackmore, 1989)
- Women are not serious about their careers (Jakobsh, 2004) and fear success (Blackmore, 1989)
- Women are emotional and weak (Growe & Montgomery, 1999; O'Keefe, 1991)
- Women are too dependent on feedback (Growe & Montgomery, 1999)
- Women leaders are not task-oriented and lack independence (Growe & Montgomery, 1999)

These misconceptions speak to the abilities, capabilities, and characteristics that women assumedly lack. It is presumed that women are underrepresented in educational

leadership in part because of the myths and misconceptions that surround female leadership. However, as argued by Blackmore and Sachs (2007):

> The "problem" of the underrepresentation of women in educational leadership is not about women's lack, whether of ambition or capacities, but rather, it is the consequence of the limited opportunities created by the systemically gendered cultural, social, and structural arrangements that inform women educator's choices and possibilities *relative* to their male colleagues (pp. 12–13).

Thus, women often felt pressure to lead as men and felt pressured into being "better qualified" (Growe & Montgomery, 1999, p. 2) and "twice as competent" (Kruger, 1996, p. 455) as their male colleagues. Despite being just as capable, women experience higher attrition and slower career mobility, and, although women professors are constantly performing above average, they have to work harder and longer than their male colleagues (Blackmore, 1989; Growe & Montgomery, 1999; Jakobsh, 2004; Kruger, 1996; O'Keefe, 1991). Such misconceptions act as a barrier for aspiring and established women professors and senior administrators. In having discussed these issues with participants, specifically stereotypes, gender biases, and misperceptions, I was better able to understand how gender has influenced their experiences and their identities as leaders.

The University's Role in Women's Career Advancement

The ways in which postsecondary institutions have addressed gender inequality leaves room for improvement; a call to action is required. Specifically, all universities and their governing bodies must address gender equality, even though some are making moderate strides towards filling leadership positions with competent and capable women (Doucet et al., 2012; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2013; Wroblewski & Leitner, 2011). Tessens et al. (2011) suggested several ways in which university leaders can support career advancement for women. The researchers

suggested that, first and foremost, universities and postsecondary institutions must actively recruit and position women in leadership positions and senior administrative roles. In doing so, decision makers in these institutions must specifically and explicitly address gender inequality and feel responsible for the continued dearth of leadership opportunities available and afforded to women. Some ways in which institutional change is possible is by providing women with more administrative assistance and support, assisting in the development and implementation of flexible work conditions, and by inviting women to get involved in decision-making committees. Finally, women leaders in university and postsecondary settings require assistance in the management of heavy workloads in order to avoid attrition and burnout. In the review of the literature, it appeared as though women professors are overworked and have multiple roles, and, with that, experience role contagion and overload due to a lack of work/life balance, inadequate childcare options, and stressful and unmanageable workloads (Tessens et al., 2011).

Chapter Summary

It is important for women leaders to be recognized as leaders, to develop social capital, and to change the social norms; women must gain these leadership strategies in order to increase personal successes and self-confidence. It is important for women leaders to see, present, and promote themselves as leaders (Sandberg, 2013; Stead & Elliot, 2012). Additionally, for women leaders, the involvement in peer networks increased the likelihood of their gaining access to influential role models and mentors. Networking and mentoring also provided supportive environments for personal and professional development and advancement (Castillo Baltodano et al., 2011). However,

these strategies for success also accompanied challenges, such as a lack of available role models and mentors, not being taken as seriously as their male colleagues, and being reluctant to self-promote.

Researchers identified the need for a more representative theoretical conceptualization of leadership that fully accounted for women's experiences as leaders (Stead & Elliot, 2012). Currently, the physical and emotional costs of leading as men and being judged negatively as women leaders are too high. It was no wonder that many women leaders express strong intentions to leave the academic profession. Women with intentions to leave felt as though this decision was influenced by negative perceptions by their colleagues. Additionally, they reported experiencing and receiving a reduced amount of workplace rewards and benefits (Dryfhout & Estes, 2010). This realization, coupled with the lack of available mentors and role models for women leaders, resulted in an *it's lonely at the top* reality for women professors and senior administrators who have chiseled their way through the glass ceiling (Swisher, 2009).

As unveiled in the literature review, women were unequally represented in the professoriate as well as in senior administration. Women who have attained these positions experienced slow career growth and advancement, likely due to issues related to gender, as well as negative perceptions and skewed expectations of women leaders. In addition to these possible factors, women traditionally experience greater barriers and challenges that impeded their success, such as negative attitudes, discrimination, career-family conflicts, and lack of mentors, to name a few. A dearth of knowledge existed in terms of perceived supports available for women leaders in universities in postsecondary

institutions. Mentorship relationships were noted as being positive and significant, however, few other supports exist.

CHAPTER 3:

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

Within this chapter, I review the research and explain how I selected the research participants. I also explain my role as the researcher, as well as the chosen data collection methods and procedures for data analysis. Finally, I explicate issues surrounding trustworthiness and ethical aspects of the research, as well as issues of transferability, confirmability, and dependability of the research.

Methodology and Research Design

From a social constructivism standpoint within qualitative research, knowledge is not absolute; rather, knowledge is co-constructed between researcher and participant. Thus, in my research, the participants' unique experiences, thoughts, and points of view were focal points. A phenomenological research design was used in order to capture participants' lived experiences and their lived realities (Creswell, 2013; Wertz et al., 2011). "By gaining a description of the experience as lived, phenomenology aims to reveal the essential meaning of the phenomenon under study instead of creating abstract theories about the phenomenon through methods of quantification" (Gee, Loewenthal, & Cayne, 2013, p. 52). In this case, *women's experiences in a position of leadership* is the phenomenon under study, and it was my goal to locate the essence of their experiences from their points of view.

In order to fully understand the phenomenon, I had to return to participants' individual experiences and approach their experiences from the "standpoint of the human being who is having the experience" (De Castro, 2003, pp. 47). Using a phenomenological research design allowed for the valuing of human subjectivity. Thus, I

was able to uncover and describe the meaning of the participants' lived experiences in positions of university leadership. The use of a phenomenological design influenced further research decisions. For example, I used open-ended questions to initiate conversations about barriers, supports, and the influence of and issues around gender. Because phenomenology values subjectivity and personal experience, the research inquiry mode had to be reflective and respectful.

Selection of Participants

During the first steps of finding participants who met the selected criteria of being a full professor or in senior administration in two Atlantic Canadian universities. I went through each department and faculty, taking note of women who were full professors and in positions of senior administration, such as dean, heads or chairs of departments, vice presidents, and provosts, for example. I wanted an assortment of women who were mothers and women who were not mothers, as well as women who were married and women who were not married. However, finding personal information was difficult—if not impossible—to achieve from reviewing their respective profiles on university websites. I then compiled a spreadsheet with their name, position title, contact information, and noted their respective university affiliation. My list consisted of over 30 women to be contacted. I sent each potential participant a personal email where I described my research project and included the Information and Invitation Letter (see Appendix A), the Consent Form (see Appendix B), the Questions for Individual Interview 1 (see Appendix C), and Information about the Leadership Logs (see Appendix D) as attachments for their review and informed consent.

After emailing each woman personally, the interest that I received was positive. Three women declined to participate, 15 women agreed to participate, and the other women did not respond to the initial email. Using email, I discussed the research process and time commitment with the individuals who were interested. After considerations of time, scheduling, and commitment, I had a total of eight women leaders who agreed to participate. At the time of this research, three of the women held senior administrative positions (i.e., vice president, dean). Four women held the position of full professor, and two of these women had administrative duties. One woman held the position of associate professor and had administrative duties. The data from the interviews and the leadership journals reflected their leadership challenges, barriers, and supports.

The Role of the Researcher

Interviewing participants can open a window into understanding their personal behavior and values, how they make meaning from experiences, and how they view the world. I was responsible to ask well-constructed questions and to engage participants in the interview discussion all while being empathic yet neutral (Patton, 2002). As interviewees, participants were provided with the opportunity to respond and express their own perspectives, ideas, and viewpoints. To allow for such disclosure, I had to pay attention to the wording of questions, presuppositions, prefaces, probes, neutrality, empathy, and rapport. These aspects were an important part of the interview dynamic between myself and the participant. The clear and unbiased expression of a participant's voice was a goal of my research, but their voice was inevitably influenced by the *presence* of the researcher in the collection of data and ultimately, in the report writing. "Hertz also underscores the importance of *voice*—how we, as authors, express and write

our stories, which data we include and which we exclude, whose voices we choose to represent and which we do not" (Fontana & Frey, 2000, p. 659). It was my duty to respectfully and responsibly report all research findings. It was also my responsibility to enter into the interview being well prepared as unexpected issues can arise. As Patton (2002) explained:

> Because qualitative methods are highly personal and interpersonal, because naturalistic inquiry takes the researcher into the real world, where people live and work, and because in-depth interviewing opens up what's inside people—qualitative inquiry may be more intrusive and involve greater reactivity than surveys, tests, and other quantitative approaches. (p. 407)

For this reason, previous qualitative research experience was a valuable asset (Law et al., 1998). It would have been difficult to enter into the research and interviewing without the understanding and knowledge of qualitative processes and methods.

On April 30, 2014 my ethics application was approved by the University of Prince Edward Island Research Ethics Board (see Appendix F). In addition, on February 27, 2014 I completed the *Tri-Council Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans Course on Research Ethics* (TCPS 2: CORE) (see Appendix G). In order to ethically conduct research at the University of Prince Edward Island, it is mandatory to complete the TCPS2: CORE. This certificate represents the completion of online training modules, through which one learns the core aspects of ethical research.

Data Collection Methods

Eight participants who represented full professors or senior administration in two universities in Atlantic Canada participated in two rounds of individual interviews (Merriam, 2009). With each participant, the first interview was conducted face-to-face and the second interview was over the telephone. In total, I conducted 16 interviews and

the transcripts were the primary data source. In addition, I asked participants to complete a daily leadership log for 7 days identifying (a) a quick overview/description of the day (b) what went well during the day and (c) what didn't go so well during the day (see Appendix D for a copy the Leadership Log instructions and details). The participants were given flexible options for log keeping, such as using an audio recorder, email, or a word processor, depending on personal preferences. If requested, I sent out daily reminders to the participants to complete their Leadership Logs. I also maintained a reflexive journal (Ahern, 1999; Ortlipp, 2008), which assisted me in becoming more aware of personal assumptions and feelings regarding the research, and I bracketed these issues (Fischer, 2009), a common practice in phenomenological research.

Data Management Strategies

Since participant confidentiality was important to maintain, I ensured proper data management in a variety of ways. First, I developed a data tracking system, which included a file naming system. I established sound transcriptions procedures to ensure consistency and efficiency and established a quality control routine. Finally, I established an appropriate and realistic research timeline. I also ensured participant confidentiality by storing electronic files on a USB and hard copies of transcripts and leadership logs in a fire- and water-proof safe. My personal reflexive journal was saved to a personal and password-protected computer. Upon completion of data collection and analysis, the document was printed and stored, and the electronic copy will be deleted after five years. Collected data will be destroyed after five years. As another part of ensuring participant confidentiality, each participant was assigned a pseudonym, her demographic location coded, and identifying information recorded in the transcripts of the interviews, such as

names of organizations or individuals was omitted or changed. This information was contained in a Microsoft Word document and stored safely and securely with other research materials. I was the sole handler of the research materials (e.g., audio recordings, leadership logs). I personally transcribed all interviews and leadership logs (if handwritten or audio-recorded). Each participant was given the opportunity to member check the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and provide feedback on the transcripts.

Data Analysis

Upon transcription of the interview audio files, I began Phase 1 and 2 of the analysis process, familiarization and initial coding (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I gained familiarity with the data by transcribing audio files, reading leadership logs, and writing my reflexive journal. In gaining familiarity, I was able to take note of emerging potential codes. This process coincided with Phase 3 of the analysis process, theme identification. The initial three phases required a great amount of concentration and effort.

NVivo is a program used for data management, tracking, indexing, and coding (Salkind, 2010). For the purpose of this research, NVivo was used in a variety of ways. First, demographic information was recorded and stored. For example, all documents for Participant A were collected and stored as a singular case. Second, NVivo was used in the analysis of the qualitative data. Each interview document was imported into the program and nodes were created. Such organization is crucial for between-document analysis. Phases 4 and 5, reviewing and defining and naming themes, occurred throughout the process of analysis. In these phases, several questions were answered: (a) How did the themes relate to one another? (b) Are the themes reflective of the entire data set? (c) Do the themes tell a story? Finally, when I was content with the picture that had

formed, each node was exported and the resulting document contained theme-specific quotes and examples that I had highlighted throughout the coding process. Finally, in the final phase, I began analysis, interpretation, and report writing. (See Table 9 for a summary of the phases of data analysis.)

Table 9

Summary of the phases of data analysis

Phase	Description	Action
Phase 1	Familiarization	Create interview document in Microsoft word (i.e., transcribe audio files); Review leadership logs; Maintain reflexive journal
Phase 2	Initial coding	Note emerging major themes and sub-themes
Phase 3	Theme identification	Note emerging major themes and sub-themes
Phase 4	Reviewing	Import data into NVivo, nodes created
Phase 5	Defining & naming themes	For each theme, provide a name and full description
Phase 6	Analysis Interpretation Report writing	Extract nodes from NVivo; Begin analysis, interpretation, and report writing

Analytical Framework: Standpoint Theory

Women in leadership positions struggled to meet role expectations due to male-biases and androcentric views of what it means to be a leader (Dean, 2009; Growe & Montgomey, 1999). Thus, for women leaders, it was difficult to *be* a leader because of the social expectations placed on them, those expectations that define what leadership looks like. In this case, leadership was defined in terms of the masculine and, therefore,

women leaders experienced a unique dissonance between their leadership beliefs and behaviors and what views were placed on them. For this reason, I used standpoint theory as the analytical lens for the research (Smith, 1999; Appelrouth & Desfer Edles, 2011). This theory coincided with the research focus and purpose. Standpoint theory purported that a person's social location (including perspectives, experiences, upbringing, etc.) has an impact on what the person knows or thinks to be true (Appelrouth & Desfer Edles, 2011). Furthermore, gender has influenced and continues to influence our experiences, knowledge, and perspectives. Smith (1999) argued, "Men and women bracket and view the world in distinctive ways, in conjunction with their distinct, biographically articulated lifeworlds" (p. 320). Thus, approaching data analysis using standpoint theory allowed me to provide a subjective representation of the participants' experiences, their lifeworld, within the male-dominated context of higher education.

Smith's standpoint theory reflected her feminist stance and her belief that "[a] feminist takes the standpoint of women…we begin with ourselves, with our sense of what we are, our own experience" (Smith, 1977, p. 13). Speaking as a woman, mother, researcher, and sociologist, Smith (1999) wrote:

> Taking the standpoint of women in exploring the social has meant for me, among other things, opening up inquiry from that insider's positioning. I am, of course, a participant in the ruling relations. I know them from the inside. (p. 225)

These quotations were significant as they not only placed Smith within her work, but they placed me within mine. To understand standpoint theory, it is important to recognize one's place and where one comes from; however, in recognizing the self, one can also recognize the other (Smith, 1999). Thus, in approaching data analysis through standpoint

theory, it was understood that individuals have different standpoints and do not possess objective knowledge (Appelrouth & Desfer Edles, 2011).

Later in her career, Smith (1999) emphasized the importance of creating a sociology of women, one that "locates [a woman] in her own life, in herself as a unitary being, as a body active, imagining, thinking, as a subject situated in her local and particular actualities" (p. 45). Thus, performing analysis through a standpoint theory lens focused on understanding participants' experiences and their lived realities. Standpoint theory coincided well with performing phenomenological research within the social constructivism paradigm, because both value and recognize the individual and their experiences.

Trustworthiness Features

A qualitative researcher must take precaution in ensuring ethical, credible, and trustworthy research practices and representation of results. In the following sections, I explicated my credibility as a researcher as well as the transferability, confirmability, and dependability of the research that I conducted.

Credibility of the Researcher

At the time of the research, I was a second-year, full time Master of Education student enrolled at the University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI). In 2012, I had received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology from the University of New Brunswick (UNB). In conducting my thesis research, I had previous and concurrent experiences as a research assistant for faculty members at UNB and UPEI. I have assisted with: participant recruitment, transcribing interviews, thematic data analysis, and statistical data analysis. In other research projects, I have reviewed literature, completed ethics

applications, constructed surveys, and more. As a part of these activities, I gained experience with programs such as NVivo, LimeSurvey, SPSS, and Transana. This research experience provided me with rich hands-on knowledge related to qualitative and quantitative research methods and enhanced my ability to conduct quality research in the area of women and leadership. This research experience helped me successfully complete this thesis research.

This year, I submitted two sole-authored papers to peer-reviewed academic journals, both targeting adult learning in postsecondary settings. Also this year, alongside Dr. Jane P. Preston, I published one peer-reviewed article, which focused on educational leadership, and we have a second co-authored paper submitted to a Canadian peer-reviewed journal. In the past two years, I have co-presented at one national conference (*Canadian Society for the Study of Education*) and one international conference (*Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration and Management*). Both of these conference papers were based on leadership issues. I also presented at a peer-reviewed, graduate student conference (*Rosa Bruno-Jofré Symposium in Education*). I was an invited guest speaker at the *Women in Leadership* conference, held at Mount Allison University, where I spoke about my thesis research. In April 2014 I was awarded a Canada Graduate Scholarship–Master's Program (SSHRC) award. This experience has provided me with scholarly experience, which further fortified my ability and self-confidence in completing this study.

In qualitative research, the researcher plays a crucial role in the research process and outcomes. As Patton (2002) wrote:

> A human being is the instrument of qualitative methods. […] This is both a strength and weakness of qualitative methods, the strength in that a well-trained,

> experienced, and astute observer adds value and credibility to the inquiry, while an ill-prepared, inexperienced, and imperceptive observe casts doubt on what is reported. (p. 64)

One way to ensure credibility was to acknowledge biases and assumptions in my reflexive journal. Another way to ensure researcher credibility was to participate in frequent and regular meetings with my thesis committee and maintain stable and honest communication with my supervisor. In sum, it was my duty to communicate any personal and professional information that might affect any and all phases of the research process, including data collection, analysis, interpretation, and report writing. No such incident occurred, and the research process was smooth.

Transferability, Confirmability, and Dependability of Research

Confirmability of research related specifically to the quality of my results (Flick, 2008). I asked, "Are the results supported by the data?" In my discussion of the findings, I referenced supporting and conflicting literature and doing so assisted in the description and contextualization of the research findings, resulting in an increased understanding of how my research added to, or contrasted with, previous academic work on related topics.

Dependability relates to research consistency over time. I asked, "Were mistakes made during the research process?" In having addressed dependability, that is, in being reflexive and critical of the process, I concluded that no mistakes were made. Transferability refers to the applicability of the results in one context to another (Patton, 2002). I allowed for transferability by clearly depicting the participants' unique personal and professional contexts in my discussions and analysis of the data.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I introduced my research methodology, research design, theoretical frameworks, and participant selection. I also explained my role as a researcher. I explicated my data collection methods, as well as data analysis and management strategies. I concluded with an explanation of trustworthiness features, such as my credibility as a researcher, as well as the transferability, confirmability, and dependability of my research and findings.

CHAPTER 4

THE PARTICIPANTS' EXPERIENCES

The purpose of this study was to describe the myriad challenges, barriers, and supports that women leaders experience in a university setting, specifically as full professors and senior administrators. The participants with whom I spoke came from two small universities in Atlantic Canada and thus, their stories reflect their unique experiences in their particular settings. In what follows, I provide an introduction and description for each of the women who participated in my research. Also, I provide thematic summaries of the data that emerged from the interviews.

Description of Each Participant

In order to appreciate and contextualize the data, a small introduction and description of each woman leader is given. Although some women told me I could use their real names and identifiers, doing so may have compromised the confidentiality of the other participants. In turn, I have given each participant a pseudonym and all other identifiers have been removed or altered to ensure confidentiality of all persons involved. Following the participant descriptions, in Table 10, I provide an overview.

Allison

Allison was a tenured, associate professor who is the head of a science department. She received tenure at the age of 43 and was head for two years. She had been at her respective university for 20 years. Allison was married and had three children. Her husband was an academic researcher and professor. Allison's children were in their teens and living at home.

Heather

Heather was a tenured, full professor in an arts department with administrative duties. She had been teaching as a professor for 35 years. Heather was married and had four children. Her husband was an academic administrator. Heather's children were in their 20s.

Joanne

Joanne was a tenured, full professor and had been a dean for two years. She had been at her respective university for 24 years. Joanne was married and had four children. Her husband was employed outside of the academic field. Joanne's children were between the ages of 25 and 35.

Erin

Erin was a tenured, full professor who was the head of an arts department. She had been at her respective university for 13 years and had been in the position of department head for six years. Erin was not married and did not have children.

Pamela

Pamela was a senior administrator. She had been in senior administration for 20 years and had been in her current position for two years. Pamela was married and did not have children.

Liz

Liz was a senior administrator. She had been in senior administration for 19 years and had been in her current position for two years. Liz was not married and did not have children.

Freda

Freda was a tenured, full professor who worked mainly with graduate education and research across disciplines. She had worked in universities in Canada and beyond for 20 years. Freda had a partner and had two children.

Charlotte

Charlotte was a tenured, full professor in an arts department. She had been at her respective university for approximately 23 years. Charlotte was married and had 2 children. Her husband was an academic professor. Her children were in their 20s.

Table 10

Description of participants

Participant Pseudonym	Rank/Appointment	Married (Y/N)	Children (Y/N)
Allison	Associate Professor and Head	Yes	Yes
Heather	Full Professor	Yes	Yes
Joanne	Full Professor and Dean	Yes	Yes
Erin	Full Professor and Head	No	No
Pamela	Vice President	Yes	No
Liz	Vice President	No	No
Freda	Full Professor	No	Yes
Charlotte	Full Professor	Yes	Yes

Data Description

While I interviewed eight women leaders from two universities in Atlantic Canada, I inquired about their perceived supports, perceived challenges, and gender issues that related to their leadership positions. In what follows, I present each of three foci in separate sections. Within each section, I thematically represent the data findings.

Personal and Professional Supports

For the women I interviewed, personal and professional supports took the form of people, things, and personal practices. Supportive people were individuals such as husbands, parents, and institutional figures like colleagues, deans, and presidents. Supportive things included institutional programs and structures, such as formal workshops and flexibility. Finally, supportive practices included self-reflection and reading. In the sub-sections that follow, I summarized the personal and professional supports that the eight women participants shared.

Institutional programs and structures as supports. One of the most reported institutional programs were workshops, sometimes referred to in the interviews as educational sessions and brownbag lunches. Allison, Erin, Joanne, and Heather spoke about the availability and the benefits of workshops as a form of professional development for university leaders. Some of the workshops were directed at "supporting leadership and learning about leadership" (Allison). Other workshops were about "how to deal with problem people, conflict negotiation, and how the budget works" (Erin). In the past, when she was a department chair, Joanne shared that there was no training or workshops for chairs, but workshops were currently mandated by the faculty collective agreement. In her leadership log, Joanne wrote, "I attended a chairs' workshop all morning. This event is mandated by the collective agreement and is put on by the Vice President Academic's office each year to assist chairs in doing their faculty reviews." Heather also noted an increase in the availability of workshops, especially for women. She said, "As you go up the ladder, for women in the academy, there is training and workshops—that exists, and that's wonderful. There are whole workshops if you are

interested in becoming dean or VP!" From the interviews, it is clear that the workshops are crucial and important. For example, Allison shared that other than the workshops available at her university, there is no other training for what she does as a department chair and professor. She shared, "What do I do now? I teach, I write grants, and I had no training in those things [in my PhD program]. Other than the workshops that the university puts on for me—which I find helpful—nothing!" Thus, workshops and educational sessions as a part of the professional supports and training that universities offer are important for academic leaders.

A second institutional support that was reported as being beneficial to women leaders was formal training, courses, or certificates paid for by their university. Erin shared:

> I took a certificate course from [University name]. The university sent me on that. They paid for it, which was really great. It was an expensive course. Those are the things that I think they've tried to do to make it better for us.

Both Liz and Pamela had participated in similar training, and Heather recognized that there are opportunities available to individuals who seek them, stating, "It is a fact that the institution is really supportive and will send you off to do a leadership course if you really want to step up to the plate."

Other miscellaneous institutional supports were mentioned, as well. For example, Allison spoke of an informal orientation session when she had first become chair. Liz spoke about departmental gatherings with food. Charlotte spoke about several faculty development programs, such as the Faculty Development Office and a summer development program offered to faculty members at her university. Most women mentioned the role of the faculty collective agreement, and how the addition of a full year

of paid parental leave benefitted both women and men, as well as providing new faculty with extra support like "start-up research funds, courses releases, and mentorship" (Joanne). Faculty collective agreements represent both an institutional and a structural support for the women. That is, they saw them as something that was offered to them as an institutional support but also something that is now part of the institutional structure.

A final support that was mentioned was the inherent flexibility of the job. In the discussion about the flexibility of an academic job, many of the women admitted that it was beneficial to their lives, especially as mothers. For example, Heather said:

> That is the nature of the whole job. That's why when people ask, 'How did you do it with four kids?' I say, are you kidding me? I want to know how people who work 9 to 5 do it. That's what I want to know. The people who have to drop off their children at daycare by 8:30 in the morning or they are going to be reprimanded at work. I can drop off my kids at 9:30! I can decide not to drop them off… there is no place easier than this profession to have kids because of the flexibility in the day.

As a mother, Joanne had a similar view of her academic job. She approached the institutional flexibility from a perspective of gratitude, arguing that there is great privilege in having an academic job, and with that comes freedom and flexibility. Allison, also a mother, shared a story similar to Heather's, where she described her not-so-typical workday:

> I have a weird workday. Some days I come in for 8:10, some days I am in at 9. I usually go home pretty early, around 4 or 4:30, but I work at night. I really feel strongly about having a family dinner that I cook every night. Everyone is there—and sometimes that has to move all over the place because my kids are doing activities—but we have a meal at home every night with the kids, not drive-thru. So, I work my day around that. I get flexibility from my job and I choose to make sure that that is an important thing.

Some other examples of flexibility related to being able to "dress down" in the summer months as Liz explained, as well as being able to work with the course timetable, as a

Department Chair, to ensure that herself or her husband were home to see their kids off the bus, as Heather shared.

Fathers as role models and husbands as supports. In inquiring about supports and sources of influence in their lives, Charlotte and Joanne shared with me stories of their fathers. Charlotte said:

> I have a really good and very supportive role model in my father. My father was a professor and my mother was a stay-at-home mom. I think that's probably one of the reasons that the academic life was really attractive to me. I saw that he got to write and read and travel and talk to people about interesting things.

Also, because Charlotte's father was an academic, she found she was able to go to him for advice and help. Furthermore, having a mentor who was removed from the situation was useful for Charlotte because her father had insightful and clear advice. In Joanne's case, her father was not previously an academic, but offered her a tremendous amount of encouragement and set high expectations that inspired her, even since his passing. Joanne said:

> The very first person who encouraged me was my father. My dad had very, very high expectations for me that I feel I have to live up to. He's no longer with us, but I always have that voice in the back of my head saying that if you're going to do a job well, you're going to do it 100 percent.

Heather also commented about the role of her parents and how they continued to influence her perspectives on her life and work, specifically with the idea of working hard and doing the grunt work, but also in being considerate of others and being able to see the big picture.

Of the participants who were married, husbands came up in the discussion of supports. Allison, Charlotte, Heather, and Pamela indicated their husband was a primary source of support. For each woman, this support may have been in different forms.

Charlotte said that her husband was her biggest support and that he stayed home when the children were young. She said:

> We have a very typical two-academic household, except that it is gender-reversed. I am the one with a full-time position, and his employment has been kind of pieced together. He works as a sessional instructor, but for the first 10 years of the kids' lives most of his time was spent at home.

Heather said that having an academic husband who could discuss the struggles and challenges of being an academic was a great support to have. She said that having a husband in the same field helped, because he understood the context of her work and the pressures she faced. Pamela spoke about the opposite, having a husband who was not an academic, and how that could be an issue:

> I think that the other issue is your spouse. It's whether or not they are easily employable. It depends on whether or not they are in the university realm. When you come to a smaller town like here, it is very difficult to find a job for the other person.

Joanne also spoke about her husband, who was not an academic and her struggles with pursuing higher education:

> My husband wasn't really supportive along the way in terms of getting my PhD. Actually, I think it's a miracle we didn't get a divorce. I had to go to [Province] for a semester to do a residency. He didn't speak to me for three months while I was gone, so that give you an example of how bad it was. When I came back, he was very angry with me, but you know, we did overcome that.

Thus, the women who were married felt as though their husbands supported them. Even in Joanne's story, she was able to travel to do her residency with the support of her husband being at home with her children. So, as Heather quipped, "I sound like one of those Americans—the ones you read in books—who say that the key to a successful career is to marry right! Actually, that's true!"

Institutional figures as supports. All of the women spoke of different institutional figures, and, sometimes they described the mentorship provided by these individuals as being crucial supports. Such supportive figures included: deans, presidents, provosts, colleagues, faculty members, department heads and chairs, staff members (e.g., administrative assistants, research managers, etc.), as well as senior administrative staff. These institutional figures provided a wide range of support. For Allison, her dean was particularly supportive of women and her president was "pro-women," saying that because the president was married to a strong academic woman, he was an exemplary "pro-women" man. Pamela also spoke about her president, and said, "My two biggest supports are my husband and the president. I am here because of the president; he recruited me, and he is the reason I am here now." Freda and Pamela talked about senior administrators who have influenced them, such as the vice president research, vice president finance, and vice president academic. Freda spoke of the moral support she received, and Pamela spoke about the importance of having trusting and respectful relationships with those individuals. Erin spoke about her dean and shared the following story of his support when he was in a headship position:

> I had written this paper with a faculty member and, while I was teaching, a letter came from the journal saying they accepted the paper for publication. George[6], who was head at the time, was standing at the top of the stairs waiting for me to come back from teaching. He was more excited than I was! It was my first peer-reviewed publication, and he was over the moon with delight!

She reflected upon the importance of this moment and how it influenced her beliefs as a leader. She said that celebrating each other's achievements and accomplishments, like how George celebrated hers, was an important thing for leaders to do. In order to foster

[6] A pseudonym is used here in any additional participant comments where the actual name was given.

strong and supportive relationships, Charlotte also spoke about the importance of celebrating the success of faculty members within a department. She said:

> One of the most important things for me has been being in a department with incredibly supportive faculty members. I think this is honestly a department where people celebrate each other's successes and there's no sense of professional jealously or keeping other people down.

She reflected on this point and said whenever she was making decisions for herself, even those with great gravity, she knew her department would support her. When asked about supportive individuals in her life, Erin said:

> I have a tremendous support system of people and my faculty colleagues here. I don't get along with everybody. I am sure there are people who would say I was a crappy head. But I have a tremendous amount of support.

She spoke of her previous head as someone who encouraged her to pursue higher-level administrative duties, influencing her assent to headship.

Institutional figures as mentors. Not only were institutional figures personally supportive, they also acted as mentors and role models for the women leaders. These figures offered advice, new insight, and moral support. In Pamela's case, her mentor challenged her to think in a different way, while one of Freda's mentors bought her out of courses so she would not burn out. Thus, mentorship took on varying forms and had different implications. For example, Joanne spoke fondly of mentors she had, but also noted the importance of mentoring women around you as well, such as her students and colleagues. However, an overarching theme arose on the topic of mentorship and that was the importance of having a role model or a mentor who was a woman. The participants offered a variety of reasons why this relationship was an especially crucial one to have and shared stories to support their claims. I decided to call this particular section *the sisterhood of scholars*, a term used by Freda.

Freda spoke of a group of women academics she belonged to, and said, "We are nine women, and we do phenomenal work. We've become a sisterhood of scholars. It has been one of the most meaningful collaborations of my whole life." Later in our interview, Freda revealed that she saw this experience and her participation in this group of women as transformational. Freda also spoke about the importance of female role models and told me of several colleagues who have influenced her. Freda reflected on one colleague in particular and said, "Who stands out the most? Melissa. Simply in terms of emulation. I didn't know you could be like that and still do well; she is just so kind, giving, and sharing." Like Freda, Allison also spoke about a female role model, Tammy, who was an academic, a mother of four, and who had a strong university career. Allison said, "I do admit that I find it hard to have a role model who doesn't have the family side of things. It's nice to see how someone else juggles, or juggled, like Tammy, who is older than I am and further along in the process. It's good to see how things can move ahead." Erin spoke of women-to-women mentorship in a similar fashion as Allison, where "you need to have a woman mentor somewhere in the mix, because only they can understand the things that these guys just don't even know." Charlotte said she thought that women-to-women mentorship was really important, especially within an academic department. She gave the example of a senior female faculty member helping and mentoring younger faculty members to apply for tenure. This particular example enforces the idea of *the sisterhood of scholars* and the idea of supporting women around you. Liz took this idea further and said, "You have the responsibility to reach as you climb. You climb, and you pull someone up behind you. That is a sign of leadership.

It's an image that is quite powerful." With this statement, she gave the example of pulling women up as you climb so that there could be strong women successors.

Joanne shared a good example of what it meant to have a female role model and mentor. She described this role model as someone who understood what it meant to have a family and a life outside of the academy and who supported Joanne through her entire assent, including her pursuit of a PhD and in her acceptance of leadership roles and positions. In the following quote, Joanne shared her learning and her relationship with Laura, a now prominent figure and well-known academic leader:

> I would say that Laura was my number one mentor. She showed me that you could be a leader and still have a heart. Also, you didn't have to be so proper all of the time. There was a time and place for having fun. You could be irreverent and sometimes completely scattered. She always managed to pull through at the end of the day. She had an incredible ability to surround herself with really good people. I learned that from her. She also taught me not to take yourself so seriously all of the time and that it was okay to show your feelings. I think sometimes as women we have to put on that—I remember my father used to say—that "stiff upper lip," but that we can't show our feelings because that shows weakness. It was absolutely impossible for me *not* to show my feelings. I was so happy when I met Laura, because she showed me that you could be strong and have a vulnerable side as well, and it didn't in any way take away from your leadership abilities.

Other stories showed a more subtle side of the influence that women have on one another. Heather shared a story about her PhD defense and remembering what one woman said to her afterward: "Don't forget to publish." Heather said, "I heard her, and took my thesis and started breaking it down into articles and sending it out." Freda spoke about a few influential female colleagues: "Everyone would help with proposals, and we would all cheer each other on when we got them. We would all go for a drink when we didn't." All of these stories support the importance of a sisterhood of women scholars and women-to-women mentorship. This section in particular focused specifically on women

helping other women. A "brotherhood" of scholars did not surface in comments during the interviews.

Personal practices as supports. A smaller theme of personal practices as supports emerged from a few interviews and from several leadership logs. Many of the women viewed family time, self-reflection, meditation, exercise, reading, and general self-care as crucial in their lives and as leaders. For example, Joanne mentioned that reading and self-reflection were important parts of her profession. The concept of self-reflection also resonated with Charlotte, who said, "We need self-reflection in all areas of our lives." For others, mindfulness and meditation were important. Erin shared, "I build in time for meditation, like getting up early in the morning and just *being* for a while, just different things like that, just to do self-care." According to Charlotte, Erin, and Pamela another way to stay balanced was through exercise. In Pamela's leadership log, she wrote:

> Overall, the day went well, except for the fact that I did not get to my exercise class. When I don't exercise, I don't feel great and become resentful of the fact that I have run out of time that day. I need to make this more of a priority so that I can stay balanced each day.

Allison also spoke about the importance of exercise and often wrote in her leadership log about going for runs with her dogs and making time to go to the gym.

Barriers and Challenges

For the eight women, barriers and challenges took the form of personal, professional, and systemic obstacles. Personal challenges included children, balancing and self-care, and sick parents. Professional challenges included difficult colleagues, feeling like an outsider, feeling lonely, taking on "emotional housework," and research challenges. Systemic barriers included sexism and other challenges that accompanied

being a woman in an academic leadership position. In the section that follows, I summarized the personal and professional barriers and challenges that the participants shared.

Children. For women pursuing successful careers in academia or in university administration, the decision to have children is not one made lightly or without full consideration. Of the eight women interviewed, five had children, and all had experienced and overcome challenges with regard to their motherhood duties in different ways. These women shared what it meant to be a mother and an academic. Further, all women interviewed discussed childrearing and motherhood and the challenges that come with that role when either pursuing a career as a professor or an administrator. Currently, there exists a *de facto* discourse around academic motherhood, where it is portrayed solely as a challenging and difficult time. The women share such challenges, but also share stories of choice and control; they felt a sense of empowerment. The following section reveals the intricacies of the experience of academic motherhood and having children.

Although changes have been made to collective agreements for the betterment of women and parents working at universities, this situation was not always the case. Currently across the majority of university campuses, faculty collective agreements enable faculty, women and men alike, to take parental leave for one year with pay. The challenges surrounding motherhood and children were during tenure track appointments and during their assent to their senior leadership positions, which required tenure as a prerequisite. Allison said, “Historically, it has been an issue to have children and do this job. Now we have a very good maternity deal here, or parental deal, so you can get 12

months [off] at almost full salary." Charlotte also talked about what it was like two decades prior. She said:

> I remember speaking to my Chair who was a very good guy and very supportive, and I was saying that my baby was due in June so I was going to need maternity leave for the fall term or at least part of it. His response was, "Well, I'll ask the department and see what they think," and I had to say, "No, you won't ask the department and see what they think. I get maternity leave."

Other women spoke of more current experiences pertaining to children and challenges. Heather said, "Others said they got pregnant, and the Dean said, 'See you.' There was no security." After becoming pregnant in a two-year contract position, Charlotte said that she was passed up for a tenured position. She said, "I know that the pregnancy was not the only thing that kept them from giving me the position, but I *know* that it affected my sense of seriousness about it." Even while on maternity leave, the mothers felt a tremendous amount of pressure to be engaged and active. Allison said, "You're always feeling the pressure of your publications and your next grant; I do know a lot of women who have been sitting there nursing and writing their grants and papers". Thus, there was a rift between motherhood and their academic appointments that left some women feeling pressured and challenged.

Several women shared their experiences of being an academic while also caring for young children. Joanne's story exemplifies the hardship and, ultimately, the idea of the *balancing act* for mothers in these positions. Joanne said:

> The biggest challenge was when I started in this position at this university. I had three kids in daycare and one in Grade 1. I was dropping kids off to daycare and coming to teach. I had 8:30 classes every single day of the week, and I taught 6 courses because that was the course load that we taught. Having never taught before, you could only imagine what that was like. It was a nightmare.

Charlotte began teaching a course while she was still on maternity leave. She said, "I remember driving home every lunch—and I lived in the country—to nurse my daughter. Back in and back out. That was stupid, but that was my nervousness [about my position]". Allison reflected on being a mother to younger children and how her job performance had changed now that her children are older, noting that it had allowed her to enter into a different phase of her career. Heather said that personally, having children had never negatively affected her performance or assent into her leadership position, but noted that it was hard for women in her department at times to raise small children and build an academic career. As evidenced, the experiences of mothers in the academy were riddled with difficulty, insecurity, and hardship, because children appeared to take their focus and time away from the university.

In contrast to the above points, all of the mothers that I interviewed also shared very positive stories and experiences with being academic mothers. Allison said:

> I loved the fact that I had my kids before my tenure track job […] I look at my younger female colleagues who are balancing having children or who have children in preschool and daycare. That is hell. That is really difficult. In retrospect, I didn't have the unbelievably torn feeling of trying to be a good mother as well as being a good faculty member, a good researchers, and a good teacher.

Retrospectively, Freda also looked back on her years of caring for her young children while balancing being an academic. She now believes that she had not given anything up, but it certainly felt that way at the time. Reflecting on her experiences, she felt happy that she took her time to complete her studies and work, because it allowed her to spend quality time with her children, too. From these stories, a sense of empowerment emerged through control and choice. This emergence became a major theme in the stories around children and motherhood that, by in large, add to the discourse in a way not told before.

Allison said, “There was certainly a personal sacrifice, but in a sense I think of it as a personal reward, because I don’t feel guilty, like, you weren’t there when they were kids”. Thus, the *de facto* discourse surrounding academic motherhood, where it is challenging and a barrier to success, is incomplete. In reality, women noted feeling empowered and feeling like that had the ability to make a choice.

Balancing and self-care. Most of the women leaders I interviewed spoke about the importance of balance and self-care. They approached the topic from experience; some noted that they felt as though they had achieved a work/life balance, and others admitted that the work/life balance was a struggle. According to Joanne, she felt as though many women leave leadership roles because of the ongoing and never-ending battle for balance. She said:

> I think some women will just decide that the balancing act is just not worth it. If you have a young family, and it means the difference between spending time with your family and not spending time with your family, then it may be a choice you don’t want to make.

Erin shared a similar sentiment, suggesting that it is difficult to have children and to be an academic leader, a job that is quite demanding. She explained:

> The work/life balance thing with women is obviously looking after the children, but it is also looking after husbands who are like large children. I don’t know how those people do it, actually. How do they do a job like this, one that is so demanding, and then go home to more people who are demanding? I do know that because I never had to do that, I am lucky.

Erin also expressed feeling guilty when she did not complete a full day of work and admitted to struggling with a work/life balance, even after doing research on how to better achieve a work/life balance, as well as counseling others about it.

Contrary to these positions two participants, Heather and Pamela, felt as though they had achieved a work/life balance that worked for them. Heather said:

> I suppose what they call the "work/life balance" is a challenge, but I've managed it. I am not sure when people say, "I can't manage the work", and I don't really know what they're saying. I really don't. I know there have been workshops on it and I always tremble thinking that they are going to ask me, "How did you do it?" and I think, well, I am organized, you've got to have energy, and you need a good routine. Those three things solve a lot of problems. And of course, there is the involved partner.

Thus, for Heather, she saw the work/life balance as very formulaic. She believed it required four things: energy, organization, routine, and an involved partner. In addition to the importance of routine, Pamela would add exercise and time away from work. She said:

> I try to achieve that work/life balance as much as I can. I think I don't do too badly at it. I make sure that exercise is a part of my routine. My husband and I make sure that we go away on vacations together and do things together because if you don't have that, then you're life is just work. That is not going to cut it.

In Pamela's position as a senior administrator, she recognized that she could work every day of the week due to the heavy workload, but she must also spend time with her husband, to exercise, and to keep her life in balance. Erin echoed this sentiment and said that her academic work was never done, there was no clear separation from one project to the next. Thus, it is important to make the work/life balance a part of your daily routine and objectives.

Sick parents. Three of the participants identified another personal challenge—sick parents. When Liz first accepted her current senior administration position, she was living elsewhere in Canada and was close to her family. She said that it was a difficult decision to accept the position and to move, because a parent was sick. Pamela was dealing with the death of a parent during the time of our interviews together, and said:

> When you have older parents, you have to deal with them. You have to deal with illness or death, or both. It could be prolonged, it could be short, but depending

> on what your family situation is, that throws a huge wrench into your life. You have to work, and you have to deal with it.

Erin also spoke about the difficulty of having to deal with aging parents, saying that it was a part of why some women might not assume leadership positions. She said, "I think for some it's just kids and aging parents, you know. You just can't keep up with the high pace of these jobs and still be able to do the rest of it all. I think a lot of women self-select out for those reasons." Although few others talked about this particular challenge, the information presented here adds to the greater understanding of what it means to achieve, or attempt to achieve, a healthy work/life balance, and just what that means for women university leaders.

Dealing with difficult colleagues. Several of the women interviewed revealed that having to deal with difficult colleagues were a professional challenge. A few women perceived some of their colleagues to be jealous or to have acted in resisting ways. Each story and situation was different and the consequences and outcomes varied. For Liz, having a difficult colleague was one of the factors in her decision to leave her previous job. Heather noted that it can be difficult to experience jealously from your colleagues. She said that the colleague's jealously can stem from insecurity and from feeling threatened. After putting a lot of energy and effort into a particular situation of collegial jealousy, Heather was able to "move sideways" into a different department. Pamela also shared her experiences with jealous colleagues and admitted that the culprits were often women. She said, "I have been subjected to what I will call jealousy. It is from other women, not from men. They've been jealous of how quickly I've gotten to a certain level. Now, I'm their peer, and they don't like it." Unlike what Heather and Pamela experienced, Erin recognized that collegial jealousy existed, but had never experienced it

herself. Even when she received a prestigious award, she felt as though her colleagues supported her and celebrated with her.

The dynamics between individuals in a working space can affect a person's experience at work. Allison shared her experience of having one difficult colleague in her department of only 10 faculty members. For example, Allison liked to encourage conversation and discussion among faculty members in meetings when coming to a decision. However, it was difficult to do so when she was also dealing with a particularly challenging colleague who often steered the meetings in different directions. In dealing with this situation, she said that it was of utmost importance to have a supportive network of colleagues, like her dean and president, to turn to for advice on how to proceed and for authoritative assistance, if necessary.

Loneliness, invisibility, the outsider. Most of the women leaders I interviewed spoke to the somewhat connected and overlapping themes of feeling lonely, invisible, or like an outsider. Both Pamela and Erin said, "It's lonely at the top" and many others echoed this sentiment in different ways. Participants shared stories about coming from away, being of a different religion, of navigating how to be a boss, coworker, and friend, as well as feeling isolated being a woman in senior administration.

Pamela said, "For women in leadership positions, it is lonelier the higher you go. That is part of the job." Liz, who was also a senior administrator, echoed this statement. However, for Liz, it was not a question of gender. She said, "I have never felt on the outside, because I was a women in senior administration. I have never felt that." Instead, she felt as though coming from away and being of a different religion made her feel like

an outsider, even invisible. She explained her situation in terms of additive layers, all contributing to her experience. Liz said:

> I feel like an outsider, because I come from away. I am an outsider because of my cultural background. At work, I've got the boss bit going on. On multiple levels, I am an outsider. I am a single woman. Put the layers on top of one another.

Freda also spoke of how coming from away, among other things, made her feel like the odd person out. In addition to feeling this way, Freda and Liz also spoke about their experiences coming to small university towns and how it influenced their experience as a university leader, specifically in terms of having to foster new collaborations and the difficulty of having to rebuild social capital.

Liz, Joanne, and Heather discussed what it meant to build social capital in terms of establishing relationships and friendships with colleagues. Joanne said it was quite alienating to be a dean to have no one to speak to. For her, being a dean was somewhere in the middle of being senior administration and being a faculty member, and she likened her position to being on a teeter-totter. For Heather, things got tricky when she found herself as a chair and having to be a part of a hiring committee. She said:

> Five of my colleagues applied—not all five were going to get the job, and there is going to be four unhappy people. That is really hard. In one case, one of them who didn't get the job told me, "Don't call me anymore. My husband and I fight every time you call, because he thinks you should have given me the job. I know it was a committee, and you didn't have a vote, but he can't accept that." That was really hard, when people lose their friendship with you because of the hiring context, and it had nothing to do with you. You lose a friend for nothing that you did.

Navigating relationships and friendships when she was in this position was difficult for Heather, and it was a sentiment shared by Liz. Liz wanted to find friendship but, because she was boss, found it challenging and alienating to do so. She said, "You have to be careful. You might find yourself in a situation where somebody does something, and, all

of a sudden, you might have to discipline the person you've befriended." Thus, for some of the participants, the difficulty of creating and keeping relationships with colleagues and being in an already lonely position influenced their experiences as women leaders.

It's Better, Not Equal

In recognizing that it is difficult to know when gender equality has been achieved, all of the women spoke of the shift they had been witnessing in terms of the representation of women leaders in universities, how women navigate the leadership realm, and how women are perceived in such ways. The following discussion of the gender shift is, by and large, summarized aptly by Charlotte's comment, "It's better, not equal." In this comment, Charlotte meant that the academic environment, specifically in relation to gender inequality, was getting better for women, but that equality had still not been achieved. Joanne said that she thought that times were changing for women. She attributed this change to two things: "Part of it is that men are becoming more accepting, and the other part is that women are becoming more assertive." She elaborated to say:

> It's a lot more supportive environment than it was in the past. I think now to the collective agreement and the supports that we have through the collective agreement, as well as the recognition that in the early years of your academic career that you do need time and you do need to be supported through start up research funds, course releases, and mentorship through the Chair.

Allison, Charlotte, and Heather also spoke of the collective agreement and how it was benefiting women and men faculty members in a positive and significant way, such as in offering better parental leave with pay. Allison gave two examples of ways in which she had noted a gender shift. First, she believed that individuals in her age group, compared to older generations of people, held better attitudes towards women leaders in academia. She said, "I've noticed there hasn't been a lot of, 'Well, we won't take her seriously,

because she's a woman', kind of talk. Things have been fine." Second, she noted seeing a shift in where faculty members tend stay home with their children. She said, "I have several young women faculty members who have stay at home partners or partners who stayed at home for a chunk of time when their kids were little. That is becoming a thing and that is great." Thus, for the women who spoke of the shift, the current state of women leadership in their respective universities had improved, specifically in terms of better collective agreements, changing perceptions of women leaders, as well as changes in who stays home with young children.

Another issue related to gender noted by participants was departmental representation. When Charlotte was first hired, she was one of the first women in her department. Presently, her department consisted of six women and five men. Similarly, Joanne said she felt she was an equal around the dean's table, even though there are only two women total. She said, "I feel pretty equal. I think the people—the men—in those positions don't have egos. I think probably it's the ego that gets in the way. I feel good around that table, so maybe times are changing." Liz spoke of how difficult it was for the status of women in universities to change, but said, "Having said that, I think that most feminists would say that as hard as change is, if we look back over decades, you do realize how much has changed."

"It is still a man's world." Despite all of the changes noted above, the women unanimously commented on the persisting issues of gender and their effect on the current state of leadership in universities. Joanne said simply, "It is still a man's world." For Joanne, being one of the few women deans was a challenge. She shared:

> There is still some remnants of the 'old boys' network' on university campuses, despite the fact that men would deny that. When I was chair of the department, I was the only woman around the table and my voice was rarely heard.

For all women, feeling unheard was not uncommon.

All eight women shared a story, or several, of feeling silenced at a meeting, or in a conversation with male colleagues, to the point of feeling invisible. For example, Erin commented on the "entrenched male culture" of academia, stating, "And just this whole kind of invisible thing. You are talking and no one is listening, and then when a man speaks, everyone listens." Joanne shared a similar sentiment, where a woman's comment or suggestion would fall upon deaf ears, but when a male colleague spoke up, his comments or suggestions were welcomed and received well. This experience was quintessential and shared among the participants. Erin concluded, "They listen to their own kind."

The entrenched male culture. This discussion of the entrenched male culture, the feelings of invisibility, and of being silenced brought up for many participants the idea of space and identity, leading to conversations about how the women participants fit into the system and how they find space. Freda spoke of the inherent sexism in the academy, stating, "It's here and it seeps in. It's in the fabric of the place." Freda was not the only one to speak of the sexist culture of the academy as something concrete, something physical. Allison spoke of the difficulty for women academics to be within and to navigate the system. She said, "It is harder for women to find *that place*." Allison spoke further of the struggle for a women to find her identity in this male space:

> I think it's much more difficult for women to find a style or stance of presenting themselves that doesn't rub some part of the population the wrong way. I know that some people will call me a bitch, will call me butch, and yet I am a mother of

> three and they know that. I have this bizarre double persona where I am a mom and an academic.

Other women discussed similar identity struggles about how to present themselves as academics and as women, and how these two identities intersect. Ultimately, the societal expectations of women as leaders influenced the perceptions of the women and of the individuals they interact with on a daily basis. Some of these expectations include those that suggest how a women leader should dress, how she should behave, and more.

"Looks matter. Size matters. Gender matters." Expectations regarding physical appearance were something frequently noted by the women interviewed. Not only did they admit that appearances matter as a woman leader in a university setting, they also shared that sometimes women are held to higher standards. This requirement to look a certain way was a challenge and a barrier. Liz said, "Looks matter. Size matters. Gender matters." Allison argued that women are held to higher standards in terms of appearances, and Charlotte said that there was an expectation for women to wear heels and makeup, for example. Along the same lines, Erin said:

> Women are supposed to be put together all of the time. The way you see a guy walk into a faculty meeting, like unshaven and long hair in a ponytail, and everyone just thinks that's really cool. But if a woman went in like that they'd think she was mentally ill.

Erin shared this example humorously, but there certainly is truth to it.

Freda spoke of a recent interaction with a PhD student that revealed just how pervasive this higher standard had become. She said:

> Yesterday I had a PhD student skyping in, we're all women on the committee, and I am the supervisor. She went, "Oh my god! Are we going live on Skype? Should I do my hair?" I said no, we're all women on the committee; you don't have to worry about your hair. She said, "Right!" and we both had a good laugh about it. It was funny to us, but it wasn't funny in some way, either. It was

> like… it's just us, we're fine; we're not going to make any judgments about your competence based on your hair.

However, women are judged based on their appearance, and, according to Joanne, a person can tell a lot about someone by how she dresses and presents herself. Joanne spoke about the importance of appearing appropriate and respectable, and, that ultimately, one's appearance plays a role in how credible that person appears. Relying on appearance alone can backfire, as Heather shared: "Being blond and blue eyed, people think you're stupid. They really do." Pamela recognized the pressure that women face in presenting themselves in a particular way, but recognized her power in the situation. She said, "I don't even worry about how I present myself, because I know how I am presenting myself every day. For me, it's a non-issue." Pamela said that she took the time to dress appropriately for a senior leadership position and felt confident that she is presenting herself as a leader. Heather echoed this sentiment in saying that she cultivated a sense of professionalism in how she presented herself, because "if you show up looking unprofessional, you are going to be perceived that way." The problem, as explained by Freda in her leadership journal, was:

> It is too often the case that women are ONLY evaluated on her appearance and not her substance. Many people still hold sexist ideas of a 'woman's place' and have outright hatred for women. This is the world in which we inhabit and it requires a serious commentary and exploration of the culture in which we find ourselves.

Thus, participants appeared to be fully aware of the standards placed upon them and had varying opinions and reactions to them. In the end, Allison concluded that a woman's appearance is only part of her assessment as a leader and that her assessment moves beyond appearances. Allison argued that after the initial first impressions, leaders are rightly assessed on their ability to complete tasks and how they work with others.

Being subjected to societal expectations. Participants also noted, by using a multitude of colorful examples, the ways in which they were subjected to societal expectations. These expectations often made it difficult for women to find a professional space to occupy as a leader because of high performance expectations, gendered misconceptions of leadership, and general myths about women leaders. Because of the importance of this finding and because of the sheer number of examples reflecting this point, I use bullet points to reflect the data.

- "One is often accused of being shrill or bossy if you're harsh." (Allison)
- "A little boy who raises his voice is a leader; a little girl who raises her voice is bossy." (Allison)
- "Be a leader, but still be feminine. Be a leader, but still be maternal. But don't be too maternal because that's a sign of weakness, and don't be too non-maternal, because that's just frosty." (Heather)
- "Being blond and blue eyed, people think you're stupid." (Heather)
- "You're an Iron Lady if you have to make consequential decisions […]. Do they refer to men who make those decisions as Iron Men? Or, do they just admire them for their leadership?" (Heather)
- "For women faculty, there is an expectation that you're going to be maternal and motherly. If not, you're a bitch. I don't think male professors are expected to be fatherly." (Heather)
- "You have to be nicer. I think that students come to me looking for some kind of leniency." (Erin)

- "There's an expectation that you're going to be motherly, and that you're going to be caring and interested in things like kids." (Erin)
- "As a woman you have to do things more perfectly than a man would do it, because you're not seen in the same way. There's a higher expectation for performance there for women." (Erin)
- "If you come across like a man you are not viewed very positively, by women or men! But if you are too soft then you are seen as weak." (Joanne)
- "If you are assertive, then you are a bitch. If you're too quiet, then you are not worth listening to." (Freda)

As conveyed in the quotes, the women were frustrated by the societal expectations placed upon them and the implications that such assessments had. Allison, Charlotte, and Joanne also noted that they had felt limited by the assessments of women's "natural traits," so to speak. They suggested that women are often assessed as being nurturing and people pleasers and are afraid to take risks and take things too personally. The three women noted that they felt pressured not to behave in such ways, because doing so limited their leadership capabilities and personas. Pamela concluded that as a leader, it is of utmost importance to learn to let things roll off your back. She said, "You will tick people off and you will make some people unhappy. You cannot make everyone happy. You have to let it go. You have to let it roll off your back."

The overall state of gender equality in academe. The eight women unanimously agreed that gender equality had not been achieved in the academy. In the above sections, a variety of gendered issues were discussed, including the academy being a "man's world," the entrenched male culture, the value placed on appearances, as well as

hindering societal expectations. All of these factors influenced the women leader's views of equality in their own intuitions, the academy at large, and the greater world culture.

The women concluded that the academy is gendered in favor of men, with gendered values, structures, and hiring practices. Liz said, "The culture of the university is still very highly gendered and is still very much guided by patriarchal values." For example, Erin argued that sexism is inherent in institutional hiring practices and suggested that there is a fear that women will become pregnant and leave or will not be able to do their jobs. Liz attributed this fear to the fact that "women's private lives are fair game, and women's bodies are fair game." Freda, in her leadership log, expressed this particular sentiment as well and suggested that women exist in a highly sexist world:

> Many people still hold sexist ideas about a "woman's place" and have an outright hatred for women. This is the world in which we inhabit and it requires a very serious commentary and exploration of the culture in which we find ourselves.

The "world in which we inhabit" that Freda spoke of is entrenched in a male culture where the structures are inherently male. Heather claimed that because of the gendered nature of the academy, women do not wish to inhabit this space. Joanne argued that women find the male-oriented culture to be "unappealing," resulting in an environment where it is simply easier for men to exist. Joanne elaborated to say that it is easier for men because they have more support at home, less childrearing responsibilities, and the culture is simply more conducive to the support and success of men.

Despite believing that hiring practices may be changing for the better, Allison argued that there is a dearth of women in influential and powerful leadership positions. She said, "There are not as many full professors who are women, there are not as many department heads, deans, vice presidents, and presidents." She and Freda both noted that

there were not as many Canada Research Chairs who were women, either. Even when women were able to successfully attain such positions, their gender was always in the forefront, argued Erin. She said, "The system is still very masculine. It's still like you're a *woman* Vice President. You're a *woman* Provost. You're not just a Provost or a Vice President." Allison also shared similar a similar opinion, but extended it to other minority and excluded groups. She said:

> We have to mindful that we're looking out for everyone here. Whether it's men or women, straight men or straight women, homosexuals, trans individuals, whatever. I would like to see a place where those factors didn't influence the success of your career.

Allison's point was that inequality in the academy affects everyone, but particularly those whose gender is subject to sexism, prejudice, and negative judgment, one such example being women. In conclusion, Liz argued that in the academy, gender matters. She said, "Gender matters because social locations *always* matters, [because] it affords you privileges." All in all, stories of inequality pervaded the interviews and still pervade the academic culture today, as I hope this section has shown.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the personal and professional supports and barriers noted by the participants were outlined and described in detail. Additionally, issues around gender were discussed. Participants noted several personal and professional supports, including husbands, institutional figures (e.g., deans), as well as institutional programs (e.g., workshops) and structures (e.g., flexibility). Participants also spoke at length about the role of mentors and networking in their success. In these stories, a *sisterhood of scholars* began to emerge. Finally, in terms of supports, women noted numerous personal practices that aided in their success, such as meditation, reading, and exercise.

Numerous barriers and challenges were noted by the participants and took the form of personal, professional, and personal obstacles. Children, work/life balance, invisibility, difficult colleagues, self-care, and sick parents were some of the challenges the participants shared. In addition to these, all women shared stories about gender, expectations, and other challenges that accompany being a woman in a university leadership position. The participants concluded that gender equality have not yet been achieved in the postsecondary setting, and that gendered expectations, sexism, and discrimination still remain strong barriers for women leaders.

CHAPTER 5:

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

In this chapter, I first discuss my research findings in relation to previous literature. Specifically, I restate my main findings and compare and contrast them to what is currently known about women leaders in academia. Second, I use standpoint theory as a lens to analyze the research findings. Third, I offer recommendations, policy considerations, and practical implications based on the results of the study. Fourth, I make suggestions for future research and studies based on my findings and the conclusions from my research. Fifth, I reflect on the research process and findings on a personal level, where I offer insight into the strong and perhaps weaker points of my research. Finally, I summarize the research, restating the purpose, research questions, methodology, methods, findings, theory, and the implications.

Discussion of Findings

Few professional or personal supports were mentioned in previous literature with regard to women leaders in academe. Those supports mentioned included mentors, networks, positive feedback from colleagues, faculty and leadership development programs, and workshops (Coleman, 2010; Dean, 2009; Dodds, 2005; Montgomery, 1999; Kosoko-Lasaki et al., 2006; Pruitt et al., 2010; Pyke, 2013; Shields, 2005). Women leaders in this research reported that positive feedback from and relationships with their colleagues increased their confidence. This point was also found in Bolton's (1996) research where the author highlighted the importance of collegiality and building rapport in the academic environment. The women interviewed in this research also reported that mentors assisted in their acclimation to the academic culture and assisted

with writing, research, and teaching. Dodds (2005) reported the same finding, where women reported the positive benefits of mentorship such as help with writing and research, as well as someone to ask for advice and information. The data that emerged from the interviews and leadership journals built on what was known about academic supports. The women interviewed in the current research reported a greater number of supports than reported in the literature review. These supports fell into three primary categories: people, things, and personal practices.

Under the category of people, women listed husbands, fathers, mentors, and institutional figures as being supportive individuals in their leadership journeys. Women perceived their role models to be supportive, above all, and someone who offered advice and insight. Women perceived their mentors to be figures they could rely on, celebrate with, and learn from. Most mentors were institutional figures, such as faculty members in their departments, colleagues from their university, colleagues from other universities, deans, presidents, and vice presidents. Several women also indicated that institutional figures, such as administrative staff or staff in research services, were invaluable in their personal success. This finding adds to the current literature on women leadership and role models, which focuses primarily on colleagues and peers as mentors. The list provided by the women participants included personal figures (e.g., husbands) and a greater sample of institutional supports (e.g., senior administration).

One theme not established in the literature was the idea of a *sisterhood of scholars*. From what women stated in the interviews, the sisterhood represented the idea of supporting and mentoring other women who were around the participants. The sisterhood described was both transformational and meaningful for those individuals who

recanted stories and experiences. Current literature has indeed focused on the benefits of mentorship; however, the existence of a *sisterhood of scholars* had only been previously mentioned in the literature by O'Keefe (1991) who emphasized the important of networking among women, and it was also mentioned by Coleman (2010) who argued for women only networks. The *sisterhood of scholars* evoked unique imagery, that which captured the relationship and bond between women academics and leaders that had not surfaced before.

A second theme to emerge from the data surrounding supports was the role that husbands played. To my knowledge, no academic literature existed at the time of this research that mentioned the powerful role that a woman's husband played. Of the married women interviewed, all shared stories about the support they had received from their husbands in one way or another. Even Joanne, whose husband did not speak to her for months while she was away for her PhD, experienced support from her husband who stayed home with her children for those strenuous months. The married women spoke of the sacrifices their husbands made, such as staying home with the children while they were young or sick or passing on a promotion, or simply having someone at home who understood the unique struggles of being an academic professor or administrator in a university setting.

Women reported supports such as institutional programs and structures as being beneficial. A variety of programs were included, such as workshops, educational sessions, and brown bag lunches. According to participants, these programs were available, beneficial, supportive, and sometimes mandated by the collective agreements. In sum, the workshops offered women the opportunity to learn and train and most women

took advantage of these occasions. Some women spoke of training opportunities, such as certificate programs or schooling, which were paid for by their respective institution. The participants insisted that such opportunities were available to women but that each individual would actively have to seek them out or inquire. Still, other than minimal information found on faculty and university websites, this knowledge built on what was previously know about institutional supports for women leaders in universities. Moreover, some women noted the training or orientation they received from their deans as important, and a few women mentioned faculty collective agreements, that is, the parental leave mandated within the collective agreements, as being ultimately supportive of both male and female university professors and administrators.

The current literature and available information on institutional supports and programs is bare and practically nonexistent. However, one good example is the leadership program described by Hornsby et al. (2012) called *The President and Provost's Leadership Institute*. Ideally, all universities and postsecondary institutions should be boasting such supports and programs, and their websites and accompanying literature should be rich with resources, suggestions, and options. From the interviews, I understood that opportunities for training, learning, and professional development are occurring and are available for women leaders. However, many women also noted an absence of institutional programs and expressed wanting to see more offered in the future.

All of the women interviewed discussed a specific institutional structure that contributed to their success: the inherent flexibility of their jobs. Institutional flexibility was mentioned by Armenti (2004a), who also linked this concept with control of work hours, autonomy, and independence as supports. The concept of institutional flexibility

also surfaced in Ward and Wolf-Wendel's (2012) work where they argued that flexibility was a positive aspect of academic positions, but that it is always coupled with heavy workloads. From the stories and experiences that emerged from the interviews, however, flexibility was undeniably a positive and significant factor. Women spoke of flexibility in their day-to-day work lives, and how it enabled them to create their own schedules, to work around family commitments, and sick children. It is possible and likely that the women interviewed presented a different reality and a different opinion about institutional flexibility, or the presence of it, *because* they succeeded in climbing the academic and administrative ladder, so to speak. Perhaps a prerequisite for success in the academic and administrative environments at postsecondary institutions required an individual who seized any available flexibility or who created it in its absence.

Lastly, women referenced multiple personal practices as being crucial supports in their lives and careers. Personal practices included exercise, self-reflection, reading, and meditation. General literature that documented the benefits of such practices existed at the time of this research. However, few appeared to specifically target women leaders, academics, and administrators in postsecondary institutions other than O'Keefe (1991) and Shields (2005). O'Keefe argued that personal reading, including books and journals, would help senior administrators in succeeding in their leadership positions and Shields emphasized the important of exercise, leisure activities, socializing. The discourse that emerged in the conversations about personal practices tied into a bigger discussion about flexibility, scheduling, and the infamous work/life balancing act that women leaders spoke of. I believe that personal practices that enhanced or contributed to women's healthy lifestyles, both in a personal and professional way, was one piece of the puzzle.

In stark contrast to the known supports for women leaders, the list of known barriers and challenges is expansive. Not only is the academic environment, culture, and structure masculine, but within it, women experience prejudice, sexism, and discrimination (Acker, 2012). If this reality was not hard enough to manage, multiple additional barriers and challenges exist for women leaders, too. Specifically, women reported a lack of quality mentorship opportunities, lack of work/life balance, lack of adequate childcare, and a lack of leadership training and development programs.

Previous literature also highlighted most of these challenges, such as the balancing act as a difficulty for women (Armenti, 2004b) especially for mothers (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012), the lack of adequate childcare (Armenti, 2004a), and the lack of leadership and administrative training programs (Hornsby et al., 2012; Tunheim & Goldschmidt, 2013). Participants also described hardships such as negative attitudes and discrimination due to their gender and felt as though unrealistic expectations are placed on them, all of which have appeared in the literature prior to this research (Acker, 2012; Growe & Montgomery, 1999; Jakobsh, 2004; Martin, 2011). Women leaders, professors, and administrators in previous literature reported overwhelming and unmanageable workloads with insufficient administrative support, as well as constant career and family conflicts (Armenti, 2004b; Blood et al., 2012; Castillo Baltodano et al., 2011; Dean 2009; Dryfhout & Estes, 2010; Growe & Montgomery, 1999; O'Keefe, 1991; Pruitt et al., 2010; Pyke, 2013; Tessens et al., 2011). Two participants, Freda and Heather, offered contradictory evidence stating that they believed they had sufficient and helpful administrative support. Most of the participants also spoke of work/family conflicts, except for Heather who instead spoke of her ability to manage her many responsibilities.

She attributed her success to four things: energy, organization, routine, and having an involved partner.

In relation to work/life balance, it is possible that my own and the participant's acceptance as this goal as achievable and attainable is uncritical (C. Reynolds, personal communication, February 16, 2015; S. MacKinnon, personal communication, March 10, 2015). The idea of achieving a work/life balance, in itself, may be problematic. Ward and Wolf-Wendell (2012) touched upon this concept of work/life balance in relation to the idea of the "greedy institution" (p. 40). Traditionally, and presently, the academic institution wants workers who are fully dedicated and devoted to their job. "While both men and women have second-shift responsibilities, research shows that women disproportionality take on second-shift responsibilities related to child care and homemaking" (p. 41). Thus, work/life can be especially difficult, if not entirely unattainable, for women, and academic mothers.

What I have just described is merely the reality of women's workplaces. At home, spousal support played a significant role in women's experiences and successes; however, women reported feeling overworked and as though they were primarily and solely responsible for the majority of household chores and childcare responsibilities. In fact, and perhaps due to such feelings, women with children had greater intentions of leaving academic professions than did their counterparts without children (Rhoads & Rhoads, 2012). The women interviewed in this research described similar challenges and their battle with the work/life balance, especially those with children. However, where this discourse shifted from the literature review is in the discussion of the state of motherhood and childbearing in universities today. Positive stories were often neglected and the

negative stories of academic motherhood overshared and overstated. By including positive, or balanced, experiences in the broader discourse, a more representative picture of motherhood in universities was revealed and with it, a greater understanding of the challenges and positive aspects that come with it.

The participants with children (i.e., five of the eight women) all spoke about the balancing act as mothers and professors or administration in their respective universities. An undertone to the shared stories and experiences was summed up in three words: challenge, choice, control. Erin and Joanne both reflected on the realities of academic mothers, noting the never-ending struggle for balance. However, the participants with children all shared stories where they felt in control and as though they had a choice. For example, Allison wanted to believe that she had chosen to have her children before tenure, that she had chosen to stay at home with them, and that she had chosen to put her career advancement on pause. Her words, her stories, were laden with confidence and commitment to her choices. Similarly, Freda reflected upon her time as a young mother and academic, concluding that although she had felt like she was giving something up at the time, she now knew that she had not. Her words, her stories, reflected a happiness and a lightness about her choices and her decisions, and I believe that she truly felt confident and in control, like Allison.

Finally, the women with children felt as though the journey of being an academic and a mother was a mixed experience, one with both sacrifices and rewards. Thus, the participant's positive and balanced experiences should be viewed as additive, rather than as replacements, to the current discourse of academic motherhood. Ward and Wolf-Mendel (2012) also spoke about the contradiction of academic motherhood as both

sacrificial and rewarding, describing it as "silver linings and clouds," with both positive and negative stories (p. 49).

Multiple issues relating to gender and leadership were brought up by the participants and in the literature review. Most of what women said during interviews and their leadership logs reaffirmed previous work in this area. Many researchers acknowledged the gendered nature of the academic institution, including its practices, culture, and processes (Armenti, 2004b, 2004b; Cummins, 2012; Dean, 2009; Stead & Elliot, 2012). The eight women participants also noted the same, and the women unanimously agreed that gender equality has not been achieved in postsecondary settings. Women stated that the academy was a "man's world," where women are judged based on their appearances and negative social expectations.

In this gendered world, some women participants felt that sexist hiring practices still remained, as well as a fear that women will become pregnant and not be able to perform their academic duties. Armenti (2004a) also found that women were worried about the effect of taking time off had on their research productivity and success at work. Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2012) also discussed "clock-stopping" and how difficult it was for women to decide to take time off. Thus, even though women have the choice to take time off, to take maternity leave, or to stop the clock, they are still fraught with indecision and worry.

It was also believed that due to having more support at home and less childrearing responsibilities, men were more likely to succeed. In the literature, several authors spoke of women's struggles to balance their multiple roles. Often, this phenomenon was referred to as the second shift, triple shift (Armenti, 2004a; Cummins, 2012), or doing

"another day's work" (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 21). Women worked their full time jobs, took care of their children, and took care of household duties and responsibilities. Women participants noted this struggle in conversations around work/life balance, and they concluded that women were indeed expected to do all of the abovementioned tasks. One way in which the participants' stories differed from the literature in this area was in their experience with supportive husbands. The supportive husband figure stayed home with sick children or took time off for childrearing. In that way, women were less strained by the immense responsibility of taking care of everything all of the time.

Various misconceptions about women leaders were revealed in the literature review. Such misconceptions included women lacking aggression, self-confidence, and independence; women not being serious about their careers and not being task-oriented; and women being too weak, too emotional, and too dependent on feedback (Growe & Montogomery, 1999; Jakobsh, 2004; O'Keefe, 1991). Women leaders in the literature also felt pressure to work harder than their male colleagues in order to achieve the same amount of success. Erin, who said that women had higher performance expectancies placed on them, echoed this particular sentiment. As for the myths and misconceptions previously mentioned in the literature, the women participants in this study reaffirmed most statements. Specifically, women participants noted that they felt they had to be the right balance between assertive and feminine. If they acted closer to one end of the spectrum more than the other, they risked being considered frosty, bossy, or weak. They also felt as though they were expected to be caring, motherly, and maternal, especially with students.

What is perhaps most disconcerting is the persistence of negative views about women leaders, even today. Although some of the literature was slightly dated, even now, women leaders in universities still face similar negative attitudes. The participants' conclusions, then, that gender equality has not been achieved are not surprising but definitely hard-hitting. The reason for the stagnation of the gender equality movement was due to the entrenched male culture and institutional system with its gendered practices and processes, said the participants. Due to this reality, women persistently experienced sexism, discrimination, and negative judgment. As Liz argued, "Gender matters because social location *always* matters, [because] it affords you privileges." Currently, men in academia are the privileged group and women, as well as other genders subject to sexism and prejudice as Allison pointed out, are underprivileged. Thus, inequality and inequity are pervasive challenges and burdens for women leaders in postsecondary institutions, as evidenced here.

Theoretical Analysis of Findings

According to standpoint theory, a person's social location inevitably impacts what one knows to be true and what is considered knowledge (Appelrouth & Desfer Edles, 2011; Crasnow, 2009; Smith 1999). Standpoint theory also purports that knowledge is mediated through subjective bodies that decide what knowledge is heard and by whom (Rouse, 2009). Thus, it can be concluded that knowledge is evolving and subjective rather than static and objective. Because social location impacts one's viewpoints and perspectives, gender must also influence one's experiences and lived reality. With these points in mind, the interview data on supports was analyzed according to standpoint theory.

The participants interviewed had similar social locations. All were female and in higher ranks of the professoriate or senior administration. According to standpoint theory, this social location undeniably impacted the women's lives, opinions, and views of leadership in postsecondary institutions. Furthermore, most of the women were married or had a partner, which would have also impacted their perceived supports. For example, husbands were able to share the workload, so to speak, in staying home with a sick child, or being sure to be home when the children got off their bus. Knowing the social location of the women participants may assist in the relevancy and applicability of the results to women in similar locations, socially or geographically.

Standpoint theory also purports that knowledge and truth are changing and subjective, rather than static and objective (Appelrouth & Desfer Edles, 2011; Smith 1999). All the women interviewed commented on the concept of change over time, specifically in reference to the state of women in postsecondary institutions. Thus, their lived realities and experiences changed over time as the academic and institutional culture changed over time, and, as such, their views about women and leadership were altered. For example, Charlotte's story about what she faced as a pregnant women and later a new mother and faculty member, contrasted greatly with her present experience as a woman academic. Charlotte, and a few other women, also commented on the dichotomy between their experiences as women in academia and in leadership positions and the experiences of their younger female colleagues. They noticed that what they experienced personally did not align with the experiences of their colleagues today due to institutional changes over time. The women interviewed actively understood and were aware of the differences in realities between themselves and younger colleagues, for

example. That is, they recognized that their standpoints differed from others, and life experiences affected each person uniquely.

While discussions of supports are minimal in the academic literature, research surrounding the barriers and challenges women leaders face, however, was in no short supply. Uncovering and understanding power relations are tenets of standpoint theory (Crasnow, 2009; Rolin, 2009; Rouse 2009). Power and gender were intricately connected in the stories shared by the women participants. The barriers that emerged in the data included personal, institutional, and social challenges for women leaders. Personal and social challenges mentioned included negative attitudes and perceptions of women, discrimination and sexism, as well as feeling ignored, invisible, or unheard. Crasnow (2009) argued that due to power relations, those being oppressed may experience silencing, something that was indeed noted by the participants. Also, in utilizing standpoint theory as a tool for research and analysis, the researcher can produce and foster the trust that is required in order to learn of the participants' stories and experiences, what Crasnow (2009) referred to as the "informant's evidence" (p. 191). It is likely that I was able to uncover evidence of negative power and gender relations because of the trusting relationships that I had fostered with the women participants.

As stated previously, gender had an influence on participants' experiences, perceptions, opinions, and knowledge as it mediated their social locations as women leaders in postsecondary institutions. The conversations and dialogues that emerged from the interviews were inevitably influenced by gender, and the women approached the questions and answers from a distinctive position of womanhood. For example, they thought about their experiences as women leaders, as mothers, as wives, and sometimes

as sisters as in the *sisterhood of scholars*. All of the stories and experiences were mitigated and influenced by gender and the titles and relationships that come with it.

Recommendations

I have three primary recommendations based on this research work. First, I would like to see an increase in gender awareness from university stakeholders, leaders, and change agents. Before change is possible, one has to be aware of the problems and challenges. I believe that the research outcomes of this work highlight various challenges and barriers that women perceived to be hindering their advancement, success, or daily work. Currently there is a lack of representation of women leaders in higher education, especially in positions of senior academic and administrative positions. Across Canada, women are also paid less than men in the same positions and increasingly and persistently experience challenges and barriers in their work and personal lives, even with collective agreements (see Table 1). For stakeholders and change agents in the university setting, such as presidents, vice presidents, senate, as well as deans, department heads and chairs, and other individuals who can actively and proactively change the institutional culture for women, there is a need for acknowledgement of challenges that women face and as well a recognition that you play a significant and crucial role in changing the system. All university personnel need to a) become aware of the supports that are available to women and make these supports easily accessible, b) increase their awareness about the positive impact that women leaders have on postsecondary institutions, and c) create a women-friendly environment that will increase the ease with which women can enter, advance, and succeed in the institution.

Second, I would like to see an increase in engagement. Specifically, there should be conversations, dialogue, and discourse surrounding gender inequality in postsecondary institutions and the negative affects it has on the academic culture and climate. For example, women in the literature and in the current research noted the cultural and institutional unfriendliness of the academic environment for women leaders. This unfriendliness inevitably has a negative effect on women's entrance into and advancement through academic and administrative ranks. University leaders and stakeholders should engage in conversation, dialogue, and discourse around these issues of gender inequality. The research outcomes of this work will allow these individuals to gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of women leaders in a university setting. The inequality that women leaders face is no longer acceptable.

Third, I would like to see an increase in action in terms of recruitment, hiring practices, mentorship opportunities, faculty and staff development programs and training, as well as institutional supports specifically directed at women. I ask that university stakeholders, change agents, and leaders actively recruit women, reflect upon gendered hiring practices, offer women more opportunities for quality mentorship and networking, increase the amount of faculty development and leadership training offered and available, as well as increase the amount of institutional supports available to faculty and administrators, especially women. These individuals must take an active role in women's entrance and advancement in senior academic and administrative positions. This point includes continuing to foster a women-friendly institutional culture of equity and equality, continuing to modify, adapt, and improve collective agreements to better support women, and continue offering workshops, training, and professional development opportunities.

Suggestions for Future Work

Based on the findings, there are numerous areas for possible future research. In no particular order, there is room for future research like this study to be conducted with female leaders in universities across Canada, not just Atlantic Canada. Further, this study could be mirrored in Canadian colleges and other postsecondary institutes. Research with a similar design to mind could explore minority groups of women who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, and Questioning (LGBTQ). The LGBTQ community is of interest to me due to my personal and professional experiences. However, to become an experienced researcher, one often studies a variety of topics. In such a fashion, my future research may also extend toward other groups, such as immigrants for whom English is a second language and people of minority ethnic groups. Other possible studies include explorations into faculty collective agreements in Canadian postsecondary institutions and what they offer to women faculty members in terms of institutional supports. There is also a greater need for research exploring quality mentorship for women and the impacts that a mentor has on their personal and professional success, as well as their advancement.

Based on one particular finding, I believe there is a great need for research outlining what it means to be a part of a sisterhood of scholars and how to define and describe this group of women. The idea of networks of women was originally brought up by O'Keefe (1991) and then by a participant, Freda. I believe that the sisterhood is more complex than a group of networked women; yet, the details and intricacies of the sisterhood of scholars are relatively unknown and remain unidentified. Due to my relationship with the participant (Freda), a future study could involve the sisterhood

members. Through interviews, and possibly a focus group, I could ascertain what it means to be a sister or member in this network of women, and how it impacted their academic success.

Personal Reflections of the Research

The thesis that you are now reading was written in small moments. It was written after a tired four-year-old went to bed with his favorite book; it was written in the dark, early, and caffeinated minutes and hours before the world had awoken; it was written at lunch times, after a quick bite to eat, and before a second or third cup of coffee. Most importantly, it was written slowly, thoughtfully, each sentence, paragraph, and page was contemplated and mulled over. Every time I referenced a participant's story, it was with caution so that I could articulate her experience carefully and with respect. Oftentimes, the words poured from me like warmed molasses, thick, rich, and flavorful. Sometimes they were pulled from my head like teeth, full of resistance and futility. However grueling the process, I am more proud of this piece of work than anything I have ever created. In this brief section, I will highlight the strong points of the research. I will also reflect on the things that I could change, if I had a time machine.

Undeniably, the strongest part of the research was having a solid, reliable, and unwavering mentor as my thesis supervisor. From the very beginning, Dr. Preston was a guide, a support, and a friend. This thesis simply would not be without her influence and contribution.

A second strong point of the research was the rich, descriptive data that emerged from the 16 interviews I conducted with eight wonderful women leaders. They welcomed me into their offices and homes. Through their stories, tales, and remarkable

honesty, they gave me a glimpse into their individualized, personal, and lived experiences. The first interviews were done face-to-face. I now believe that this interview method is a must for building rapport when doing interviews in qualitative research. If time and resources had allowed for it, the second round of interviews would have been done similarly rather than over the telephone. In future work I will attempt to make it a reality, because I believe it truly added to the quality of the data.

A third strong point of the research was the leadership logs that the eight women leaders completed over the course of seven days. Earlier in the development of this thesis project, I had contemplated removing this component of their willing and voluntary participation. How in the world could I ask eight incredibly busy women to journal every day for seven days? Retrospectively, perhaps I should not have asked this task of them. However, I received only positive feedback from the participants regarding this process, all of which enjoyed journaling. In the future I could see using the leadership logs once more, but perhaps not in combination with two interviews.

Finally, if I could go back and change one thing about my research, it would be the participant pool. I know now that I should have focused either on senior administrators or on senior professors. I believe that although both groups had commonalities (being women leaders in Atlantic Canadian university settings) that faced some similar barriers and supports, it may have benefitted my research to look at the two groups separately. However, and with that said, I would still argue that the data that emerged are strong, reflective of their experiences and lives, and will influence policy and decision makers, stakeholders, and university figures in a positive way.

Summary

In this research, I documented the lived experiences of eight women leaders who were full professors or held senior leadership positions at two universities in Atlantic Canada. I looked specifically at the supports that assisted these women in assuming and maintaining a leadership position in a university, the personal and professional challenges, as well as the influence of gender in their professional lives. I conducted research under a social constructivism worldview, utilized a phenomenological research design, and analyzed the data using standpoint theory. Under this research framework, I explored the perceived realities of my participants.

Eight women leaders with various ranks and positions shared their personal experiences and stories. The participants spoke of personal and professional supports, including their husbands, institutional figures, and mentors. They also spoke of institutional programs and workshops as being helpful. Other supports mentioned included mentors and role models, the inherent flexibility of the job, and other personal practices (exercise, reading, meditation). Women also spoke of numerous barriers and challenges that they faced in their leadership journeys and in their current workplace realities. They spoke of the challenge of having and raising children while being an academic, all while maintaining a healthy work/life balance. They spoke of the difficulty of putting time into self-care. Women shared stories of difficult colleagues, feeling like an outsider, and feeling as though they were invisible and unheard. Some women felt lonely in their positions; some said it was part of the job. Most women spoke of inherent challenges related to gender in the institution, such as the prevalence of gender inequity

and inequality, gendered social expectations, and feeling as though the university itself and its culture is still dominated by men.

Altogether, the stories and experiences shared within this thesis allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of women leaders in postsecondary institutions. It is apparent that gender inequality remains an ongoing problem for women leaders, both in academic and administrative positions. The perceived supports—mentors, husbands, institutional figures, and others—assist in mitigating the negative and detrimental effects, but only to a certain extent. University stakeholders, decision-makers, change agents, and leaders must take it upon themselves to be accountable and responsible for fostering a woman-friendly institutional culture, one that actively welcomes, hires, and supports its women leaders of all types, and which assists in the abolishment of inequality, gendered myths and misconceptions about women, as well as institutional sexism and discrimination. It is my hope that the information presented herein will provide readers with information and shared experiences that will shape future discourse surrounding women leaders in postsecondary institutions.

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Appendix A: Information and Invitation Letter to Participate in a Study

I invite you to participate in a research project called, ***"The Lived Experiences of Female Leaders in Two University Settings: Perceived Supports, Barriers, and Challenges."*** In order to make an informed decision about whether you wish to be a part of this research study, please read this letter carefully. This letter is a part of the process of informed consent.

The Purpose of the Study and its Design

The purpose of this study is to document the lived experiences of female leaders who are full professors and/or hold senior leadership positions in universities in Atlantic Canada. The questions I want to answer are: (a) What personal and professional supports assist women in assuming and maintaining a leadership position in a university? (b) What are the personal and professional challenges for women leaders in a university? (c) How does gender influence a woman's leadership journey and reality?

To answer these questions, I intend to invite approximately 8 individuals to participant in the study, all who hold positions of senior administration or full professorship at UPEI or at one other university in Atlantic Canada. I hope to conduct two interviews per participant or 16 interviews, in total. I will invite participants to keep a daily *"Leadership Log"* for 7 days, jotting down (a) a quick overview/description of the day (b) what went well during the day (c) what didn't go so well during the day.

What You Will Do in This Study, Where it Takes Place, and How Much Time it Takes

I will interview each participant twice at two different points during my research. Individual interviews will be located in a place and time convenient to the participant. Participants do not need to prepare for the interview in any way, other than reviewing the questions and thinking about their answers ahead of time, if they desire. The length of the interviews will be approximately 60 minutes each. As mentioned above, I have asked participants to keep a Leadership Log for 7 days. Each entry will take approximately 10 minutes at the end of each day, for seven days.

Withdrawal from the Study

Participation in this study is voluntary. Otherwise said, it is up to you whether or not you want to participate in this study. If you decide to participate, but later decide you no longer want to be a part of the study, you may withdraw from the study up until I defend my thesis research. Up until then, you can withdraw from the study with no consequences and all of the data you have contributed will be destroyed.

Possible Risks and Benefits

There are no known specific risks or benefits to participating in this study.

Confidentiality and Storage of Data

Participants will be able to review any transcribed interviews. Audio-recorded interview data and the "*Leadership Logs*" collected during the study will not be available to anyone other than me, Brittany Jakubiec, and my thesis supervisor, Dr. Jane P. Preston. I will keep all data in a locked cabinet. After 5 years, all data will be destroyed.

In the transcripts of the audio-recordings and the "*Leadership Logs*", I will delete the real names of the participants and give them false names (pseudonyms). In all reports, presentations, and publications the participants' names and personal information that might identify them will not be used. In other words, specific details that might enable a reader to deduce the participants' identities will not be used in the reporting of the data. In all reports, presentations, and publications I will use a false name for the participant.

It is important to note that the information you provide for this study will be confidential, with the exception of the limits of the law.

Reporting of Results

I will write up the results of this study in my Master of Education thesis. Because the UPEI, Faculty of Education has an open-defense policy, you are welcome to attend my thesis defense, hopefully scheduled for early 2015. I also hope to publish the results in academic journals. I may also report the findings of this study at conferences. If participants are interested, I will provide an electronic copy of the final thesis.

Questions

If you have any questions concerning the study, please ask me at any time. This research has been approved by the UPEI Research Ethics Board. Any concerns regarding your involvement in this study may be directed to reb@upei.ca or by calling (902) 620–5104.

Choosing to Participate

Enclosed are two copies of a written consent form for your consideration. If you decide to accept the invitation to participate in this study, please sign and date both consent forms. Return one consent form to me in the self-addressed stamped envelope or through email. Please maintain one copy of the consent form for your records. If you have any questions about the study or if you would like more information, please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor, Dr. Jane P. Preston.

Sincerely,

Brittany Jakubiec
Master of Education student, Faculty of Education
University of Prince Edward Island
550 University Avenue
Charlottetown, PE
C1A 4P3
[redacted], e: bjakubiec@upei.ca

Dr. Jane P. Preston
Assistant Professor, Faculty of Education,
University of Prince Edward Island
550 University Ave.
Charlottetown, PE
C1A 4P3
(902) 620–5074 (office), e: jpreston@upei.ca

Appendix B: Consent Form

Dear Participant,
I invite you to participate in a research study called, ***"The Lived Experiences of Female Leaders in Two University Settings: Perceived Supports, Barriers, and Challenges."*** Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you might have.

Your signature on this form means that:

- You have read the information about the research. You understand what this study is about and what you will be asked to do.
- You have had adequate time to think about whether or not you want to participant in the study. You have been able to ask questions about this study and are satisfied with the answers to your questions.
- You understand that there are no known risks associated with the study.
- You understand that you are free to withdraw from the study (until the results of the study are communicated at my thesis defense) without having to give a reason, and your withdrawal from the study will not affect you now or in the future. You understand if you withdraw from the study, any data collected from you will be destroyed.
- You understand that the information you provide will be confidential within the limits of the law.
- You understand you can keep a copy of the signed and dated consent form.
- You understand that you can contact the UPEI Research Ethics Board at (902) 620-5104 or by email at reb@upei.ca if you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of this study.
- You understand that, if you sign this form, you do not give up your legal rights and do not release the researchers from their professional responsibilities.
- You agree that the researcher may use quotations of what you have said, but your name will not be identified in any publications or presentations from this study.
- You agree to be audio-recorded during the interview.

Signature of Participant **Date**

Signature of Researcher: I have explained this study to the best of my ability. I invited questions and gave answers. I believe the participant fully understands what is involved in being in the study, any potential risks of the study, and that she has freely chosen to be in the study.

Signature of Researcher **Date**

*If you would like to be informed of the results of this study, please include your email address:

Brittany Jakubiec
Master of Education student, Faculty of Education
University of Prince Edward Island
550 University Avenue
Charlottetown, PE
C1A 4P3
[redacted] e: bjakubiec@upei.ca

Dr. Jane P. Preston
Assistant Professor, Faculty of Education,
University of Prince Edward Island
550 University Ave.
Charlottetown, PE
C1A 4P3
(902) 620–5074 (office), e: jpreston@upei.ca

Appendix C: Questions for Individual Interview #1

1. Tell me your name and provide a bit of background about yourself? For example, tell me a bit about your family, your interests, etc.
2. What is your position at the university? How long have you been in this position?
3. Can you tell me about your professional history that lead you to this position? In other words, how did you get to be in the leadership position that you are currently in?
4. What is a major support that you experienced in your assent to this position? Is this support unique to women? How so?
5. Can you tell me about personal and/or professional supports that you have or that help you be successful in your position?
6. What is a major challenge that you experienced in your assent to this position? ? Is this challenge unique to women? How so?
7. Can you tell me about any ongoing or current challenges you might face or be facing in your position?
8. How do you overcome obstacles that face or might even impede your work? Can you give an example?
9. Are there specific jobs or positions that you feel are critical in preparing women for leadership roles?
10. What supports exist, to your knowledge, for women pursuing a career in academia?
11. What barriers or challenges exist, to your knowledge, for women pursuing a career in academia?
12. Why do you think that some women succeed in leadership positions and others do not? Are there barriers that some overcome and others do not?

13. What do you think are important leadership qualities or traits of leaders? Do you think they are unique to women? If so, How?
14. Did you have a mentor who influenced your leadership career? What role did this person have in your leadership journey?
15. What kinds of personal choices and/or personal sacrifices have you made during your leadership journey?
16. Can you tell me about your most rewarding leadership experience?
17. Do you see yourself as a role model for other women leaders or women aspiring to become educational leaders? Explain.
18. Can you tell me about a time where you played the role of mentor for a woman?
19. What advice would you give to a younger woman leader with regard managing and embellishing her career?
20. Where do you see your career moving? What is next for you?
21. Do you have any last comments or questions?

Appendix D: Leadership Log

As a participant in this study, you will be invited to keep a leadership log for the duration of 7 days. You will be asked to describe:

1. A quick overview/description of the day
2. What went well during the day
3. What didn't go so well during the day

There are no restrictions or limitations placed on the length of your daily log entries.

In order to keep this task flexible, you may keep a written log, either electronically or handwritten. Electronic logs will be emailed and handwritten logs mailed (postage paid). Alternatively, you may utilize an audio recorder to record your daily log entries. I recommend using www.recordmp3.org as you may choose to save your entry as an .MP3 file directly to your computer or to save the file to an online link. If you decide to save as an .MP3 file, these will be emailed to me. If you decide to save the file to an online link, you must share all links via email.

In offering such flexible options, it is my hope that keeping a leadership log will not increase your daily workload.

Daily email reminders may be sent out, if requested.

Please indicate your preferred option, below:

☐ Electronic log[1] (to be emailed)

☐ Handwritten log[1] (to be mailed, postage paid)

☐ MP3 audio recordings of daily log[2] (to be emailed)

☐ Links to audio recordings of daily log[2] (to be emailed)

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[1]*Special instructions for written or typed log entries*:

1. Write the date (e.g., Monday, January 27, 2014).
2. State your name (e.g., Brittany Jakubiec).
3. Begin a new log entry on a new page.

[2]*Special instructions for audio recorded log entries*:

1. Say the date aloud (e.g., Today is Monday, January 27, 2014).
2. State your name (e.g., Brittany Jakubiec).
3. Begin a new recording for each new log entry.

Appendix E: Transcript/Data Release Form

Name of the Study: The Lived Experiences of Female Leaders in Two University Settings: Perceived Supports, Barriers, and Challenges.

Researcher Brittany Jakubiec ([redacted], bjakubiec@upei.ca)

Dear Participant,

In relation to the research study entitled, ***"The Lived Experiences of Female Leaders in Two University Settings: Perceived Supports, Barriers, and Challenges"*** I, (name of participant) have reviewed the transcripts of the interviews I had with Brittany Jakubiec. I have been provided with the opportunity to add, alter, and delete information from the transcript(s) as appropriate. I acknowledge that the summary accurately reflects what I said during the interviews.

_____ _____

Signature of Participant **Date**

_____ _____

Signature of Researcher **Date**

Appendix F: UPEI REB Letter of Approval

UPEI
UNIVERSITY of Prince Edward ISLAND
550 University Avenue
Charlottetown
Prince Edward Island
Canada C1A 4P3

April 30 2014

B Jakubiec
Faculty of Education

REB Ref # 6005731

"The Lived Experiences of Women Leaders in University Settings: Perceived Supports and Barriers"

The above mentioned research proposal has been reviewed under the expedited review track by the UPEI Research Ethics Board. I am pleased to inform you that it has received ethics approval. Please be advised that the Research Ethics Board currently operates according to the *Tri-Council Policy Statement 2: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* and applicable laws and regulations.

The approval for the study as presented is valid for one year. It is your responsibility to ensure that the Ethics Renewal form is forwarded to Research Services prior to the renewal date. The information provided in this form must be current to the time of submission and submitted to Research Services not less than 30 days of the anniversary of your approval date. The Ethics Renewal from can be downloaded from the Research Services website (http://www.upei.ca/research/reb_forms).

Any proposed changes to the study must also be submitted on the same form to the UPEI Research Ethics Board for approval.

The Research Ethics Board advises that **IF YOU DO NOT** return the completed Ethics Renewal form prior to the date of renewal:

- Your ethics approval will lapse
- You will be required to stop research activity immediately
- You will not be permitted to restart the study until you reapply for and receive approval to undertake the study again.

Lapse in ethics approval may result in interruption or termination of funding.

Notwithstanding the approval of the REB, the primary responsibility for the ethical conduct of the investigation remains with you.

Sincerely,

James E. Moran, Ph.D.
Chair, UPEI Research Ethics Board

Appendix G: REB Certificate of Completion

PANEL ON RESEARCH ETHICS

Navigating the ethics of human research

TCPS 2: CORE

Certificate of Completion

This document certifies that

Brittany Jakubiec

has completed the Tri-Council Policy Statement:
Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans
Course on Research Ethics (TCPS 2: CORE)

Date of Issue: **27 February, 2014**